Aeschylus

THE ORESTEIA

TRANSLATED INTO
ENGLISH RHYMING VERSE
by

GILBERT MURRAY, O.M.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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A reprint of Professor Gilbert Murray's famous translation of the great trilogy together with his revised notes and long introduction for the collected edition.

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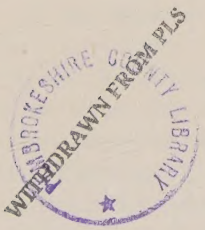

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INTRODUCTION

THE ORESTEIA

So far as such things can pierce through the veil of imperfect understanding which blurs for us the outlines of the original language, or the other veil of obvious inadequacy which deadens every translation, the greatness of the *Oresteia* shows itself, both in the splendour of its expression and the dramatic intensity of its main scenes. But it is not merely a great tragedy and a great poem. It is also the attempt of a powerful mind to think out, in terms that are not quite our terms, one of the deep unsolved mysteries of life—the problem of Sin, Punishment, and Forgiveness. I call it a mystery because the human race has, after all, never quite made up its mind whether the Moral Law is a fact or a superstition. Aeschylus believed it to be a fact. But there were many sophists in his time, as there have been later, who rejected the whole conception as a mere "projection" of human habits into external nature, the result of animism or some anthropomorphic fancy. A man who successfully kills a rival or forges a will, they will say, without detection, is so much the better off and need make no further fuss, as long as he does not give way to his

nerves. If he does that, of course, he will imagine that some supernatural Eye has seen him and is angry, or that the Law which he has broken will somehow avenge itself. He will feel that some sin or pollution rests upon him, and that he will not be "clean" till he has confessed or atoned.

At any rate, whether through superstition or not, the average decent man in most ages of the world has felt in that way. A Jew would say: Jehovah has seen and will punish. An ancient Greek, while not excluding such direct action by particular gods, was more inclined to regard the moral law among men and the physical law which obtains in nature as aspects of the same thing. *Μηδὲν ἄγαν*, Nothing too much, is the rule in both. Every man has his place and portion in the life of his community, and so have all living things in theirs. There is an accepted Custom or Order (Themis) which is right; there are things that are forbidden or "unholy"; there is also Justice (Dikê) which re-establishes the order when it is broken. These are plain facts. The Sun moves in an annual course; the vegetation and the flocks renew themselves in regular cycle every year. When the due order is observed all is well. When the Sun is too hot, when the spring comes too early, when man ploughs at the wrong time or ploughs land that is not his to plough, the due order has been transgressed and things go wrong.

The typical sin which all things, so far as they have life, commit is in poetry *Hubris*, a word generally translated "insolence" or "pride." In the more analytical language of prose it is called *Pleonexia*—the habit of always "having-more," or trying to have

more. Hubris grasps at more, bursts bounds and breaks the order; it is followed by Dikê, Justice, which re-establishes them. This rhythm—Hubris-Dikê, Pride and its fall, Sin and its Chastisement—is the commonest burden of those philosophical lyrics which are characteristic of Greek tragedy, and indeed of most of the legends and traditions out of which tragedies were formed. It is hardly too much to say that it forms the normal pattern in which the philosophers and historians of the fifth century, as well as the poets, tended to regard life. For Herodotus it was Hubris that led Xerxes to his war of conquest against Greece; it was Dikê that inevitably struck him down. For Thucydides it was Hubris that led Athens to her final denial of God at Melos, and Dikê that immediately followed at Syracuse. Recent writers have shown that the same conception lies at the very heart of that worship of the Vegetation-spirit or Year-daemon which formed the staple religion of Greece and of Europe. The life of the Year himself is normally a story of Pride and Punishment. He arrives with the first faint blades of vegetation, he is welcomed, he waxes strong, waxes too strong and claims too much, commits his Hubris, and must therefore die. It is the way of all flesh. It is life itself seen in the tragic pattern. "The Sun himself," says the philosopher Heraclitus, "must not transgress his measure; else the Erinyes, helpers of Justice, will pursue him." "All things pass back into that from which they arose," says Anaximander. "They pay atonement for their injustice one to another according to the law of time." Nay, in the last analysis, if we ask why things die, must not the reason be that all in

some way have transgressed, and the wages of sin is death?*

Each of the three plays in the *Oresteia* has its separate problem or theme. In the *Agamemnon* it is the inevitability of retribution. Life is a savage struggle, yet the divine Pity broods for ever over it. Strong creatures, following their own lusts, do Hubris everywhere to weaker things. None of the victims can hit back. All are helpless. But the accumulated tension of wrong done becomes intolerable. The world cannot bear it. Nameless gods or Erinyes vibrate with indignant pity, and inevitably the storm bursts. It is difficult in the *Agamemnon* to isolate one particular wrong for which the King is punished, or one particular motive which leads Clytemnestra to her crime; one feels rather the whole cruelty of life turning, like a fire-ringed scorpion, its poison against itself. Behind the wickedness or blindness of this or that particular son of Atreus there is the Daemon of the House, which cannot rest because of all the innocent blood that has been shed, and tries madly to find peace through more blood. Even Clytemnestra, though her conduct can all be thought out as the result of personal grievances, is really a tool caught up in the hand of a greater power and then flung away.

In the second play, the *Choëphoroe*, the theme is the duty of punishment. A wrong has been done

* See my *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 47. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, Chapter I. See also the fine pages on the Agamemnon in the same writer's *Thucydides Mythistoricus*. pp. 144, ff. (E. Arnold, 1907).

and must be atoned. The broken order must be re-established. The murderers of Agamemnon are successful and prosperous; they will be finally triumphant unless justice is done upon them. And, since the story is set in times when there is no public law and the blood-feud is the only vehicle of justice, there is no one to do justice except Orestes. The duty is absolutely his: if he neglects it evil will triumph. Therefore, though the criminal be his own mother, he must act. "The slayer shall perish." "On him that doeth it shall be done." That is the eternal Law, known of old and specially sanctioned now by the command of Apollo.

Yet, if so, we ask in the third play, the *Eumenides*, what is to be the fate of Orestes himself? Is he to be punished for doing right, or at least what he believed to be right? Is this dead, remorseless Law everything, and the truth that "The doer shall suffer" the whole truth? If so there is no end; for, though every wrong is justly punished, yet, as the world goes, every punishment is itself a new wrong calling for fresh vengeance. The law counts all bloodshed as the same: the slayer shall die. But in truth, if we look close, every deed is different. Again and again throughout the trilogy Aeschylus studies the psychology of the sinner or wrong-doer, and finds it never to be pure evil. It is the answer to some other wrong, or it is the result of some Erôs, or passionate longing, some Peitho, or persuading temptation, some stealing Atê or Delusion, which makes the evil thing seem good. There may even be a case, like that of Orestes, in which the man is equally an offender before the Law whether he does his vengeance or fails to do it. It

seems strange that there should be in the divine order no clue to this tangle, except

> The ancient blinded vengeance and the wrong that amendeth wrong.

Is there nothing in earth or heaven that can understand, no power that can pardon?

That is the problem of the *Eumenides*. Aeschylus brings to it his own answer, dimly hinted in the *Agamemnon* (pp. 41 f.), but not fully faced until the third play of the trilogy. Indeed, even there critics have felt much uncertainty and have put forward sometimes the most curious explanations; but it seems to the present writer that our knowledge of early Greek religion has now reached a stage at which this old and famous problem has at last become clear. It is treated below in the special introduction to the *Eumenides*.

THE AGAMEMNON

At the opening of the *Agamemnon* we find Clytemnestra alienated from her husband and secretly befriended with his ancestral enemy, Aigisthos. The air is heavy and throbbing with hate; hate which is evil but has its due cause. Agamemnon, obeying the prophet Calchas, when the fleet lay storm-bound at Aulis, had given his own daughter, Iphigenîa, as a human sacrifice. And if we ask how a sane man had consented to such an act, we are told of his gradual temptation; the deadly excuse offered by ancient superstition; and above all, the fact that he had already inwardly accepted the great whole of which

this horror was a part. At the first outset of his expedition against Troy there had appeared an omen, the bloody sign of two eagles devouring a mother-hare with her unborn young. A great question was thus put to the Kings and their prophet: Did they or did they not accept the sign, and wish to be those Eagles? And they had answered Yes. They would have their vengeance, their full and extreme victory, and were ready to pay the price. The sign once accepted, the prophet recoils from the consequences which, in prophetic vision, he sees following therefrom: but the decision has been taken, and the long tale of cruelty rolls on, culminating in the triumphant sack of Troy, which itself becomes not an assertion of Justice but a whirlwind of godless destruction. And through all these doings of fierce beasts and angry men the unseen Pity has been alive and watching, the Artemis who "abhors the Eagles' feast," the "Apollo or Pan or Zeus" who hears the crying of the robbed vulture; nay, if even the Gods were deaf, the mere "wrong of the dead" at Troy might waken, groping for some retribution upon the "Slayer of Many Men" (pp. 49, 54).

If we ask why men are so blind, seeking their welfare thus through incessant evil, Aeschylus will tell us that the cause lies in the infection of old sin, old cruelty. There is no doubt somewhere a *πρώταρχος Ἄτη*, a "first blind deed of wrong," but in practice every wrong is the result of another. And the Children of Atreus are steeped to the lips in them. When the prophetess Cassandra, out of her first vague horror at the evil House, begins to grope towards some definite image, first and most haunting comes the

sound of the weeping of two little children, murdered long ago, in a feud that was not theirs. From that point, more than any other, the Daemon or Genius of the House—more than its "Luck," a little less than its Guardian Angel—becomes an Alastor or embodied Curse, a "Red Slayer" which cries ever for peace and cleansing, but can seek them only in the same blind way, through vengeance, and, when that fails, then through more vengeance (p. 103).

This awful conception of a race intent upon its own wrongs, and blindly groping towards the very terror it is trying to avoid, is typified, as it were, in the Cassandra story. That daughter of Priam was beloved by Apollo, who gave her the power of true prophecy. In some way that we know not, she broke her promise to the God; and, since his gift could not be recalled, he added to it the curse that, while she should always foresee and foretell the truth, none should believe her. The Cassandra scene is a creation beyond praise or criticism. The old scholiast speaks of the "pity and amazement" which it causes. The Elders who talk with her wish to believe, they try to understand, they are really convinced of Cassandra's powers. But the curse is too strong. The special thing which Cassandra tries again and again to say always eludes them, and they can raise no finger to prevent the disaster happening. And when it does happen they are, as they have described themselves, weak and very old, "dreams wandering in the daylight."

The characters of this play seem, in a sense, to arise out of the theme and consequently to have, amid all their dramatic solidity, a further significance which is almost symbolic. Cassandra is, as it were, the

incarnation of that knowledge which Herodotus describes as the crown of sorrow, the knowledge which sees and warns and cannot help (*Hdt.*, ix. 16). Agamemnon himself, the King of Kings, triumphant and doomed, is a symbol of pride and the fall of pride. We must not think of him as bad or specially cruel. The watchman loved him (ll. 34 f.), and the lamentations of the Elders over his death have a note of personal affection (pp. 100 ff.). But I suspect that Aeschylus, a believer in the mystic meaning of names, took the name Agamemnon to be a warning that *Ἄγα μίμνει*, "the unseen Wrath abides." *Agâ*, of course, is not exactly wrath; it is more like Nemesis, the feeling that something is *ἄγαν*, "too much," the condemnation of *Hubris* (pride or overgrowth) and of all things that are in excess. *Agâ* is sometimes called "the jealousy of God," but such a translation is not happy. It is not the jealousy, nor even the indignation, of a personal God, but the profound repudiation and reversal of Hubris which is the very law of the Cosmos. Through all the triumph of the conqueror, this *Agâ* abides.

The greatest and most human character of the whole play is Clytemnestra. She is conceived on the grand Aeschylean scale, a scale which makes even Lady Macbeth and Beatrice Cenci seem small; she is more the kinswoman of Brynhild. Yet she is full not only of character, but of subtle psychology. She is the first and leading example of that time-honoured ornament of the tragic stage, the sympathetic, or semi-sympathetic, heroine-criminal. Aeschylus employs none of the devices of later playwrights to make her interesting. He admits, of course, no approach

to a love-scene; he uses no sophisms; but he does make us see through Clytemnestra's eyes and feel through her passions. The agony of silent prayer in which, if my conception is right, we first see her, helps to interpret her speeches when they come; but every speech needs close study. She dare not speak sincerely or show her real feelings until Agamemnon is dead; and then she is practically a mad-woman.

For I think here that there is a point which has not been observed. It is that Clytemnestra is conceived as being really "possessed" by the Daemon of the House when she commits her crime. Her statements on p. 103 are not empty metaphor. A careful study of the scene after the murder will show that she appears first "possessed" and almost insane with triumph, utterly dominating the Elders and leaving them no power to answer. Then gradually the unnatural force dies out from her. The deed that was first an ecstasy of delight becomes an "affliction" (pp. 106, 110). The strength that defied the world flags and changes into a longing for peace. She has done her work. She has purified the House of its madness; now let her go away and live out her life in quiet. When Aigisthos appears, and the scene suddenly becomes filled with the wrangling of common men, Clytemnestra fades into a long silence, from which she only emerges at the very end of the drama to pray again for Peace, and, strangest of all, to utter the entreaty: "Let us not stain ourselves with blood!"* The splash of her husband's blood was visible on her face at the time. Had she in her trance-like state

* Another reading, however, is suggested by Wilamowitz: "Enough of evil. Begin nothing. We are stained with blood."

actually forgotten, or did she, even then, not feel that particular blood to be a stain?

THE CHOËPHOROE

The vengeance of Orestes was made the subject of plays by all three tragedians. All the plays are in their ways masterpieces, and each highly characteristic of its writer. Euripides realizes and psychologizes the horror of the story; Sophocles, apparently from a deliberate adoption of the "Homeric" tone, suppresses the religious problem and concentrates on the elements of direct passion. Aeschylus, as I have said elsewhere, "though steeped in the glory of the world of legend, would not lightly accept its judgment upon religious and moral questions, and above all would not, in that region, play at make-believe. He would not elude the horror of this story by simply not mentioning it, like Homer, or by pretending that an evil act was a good one, like Sophocles. He faces the horror; realizes it; and tries to surmount it on the sweep of a great wave of religious emotion. The mother-murder, even if done by a god's command, is a sin; a sin to be expiated by unfathomable suffering. Yet, since the god cannot have commanded evil, it is a duty also. It is a sin that must be committed." The crucial difference is that the *Choëphoroe* is not self-contained, while the other plays are. They are concerned with a particular story; it, as we have seen above, is part of a trilogy dealing with the great problem which lies at the centre of Greek religion—Hubris, Dikê, Soteria, or Crime, Punishment and Deliverance.

Though to the Greek student this is perhaps, of

all extant tragedies, the most obscure in detail of language, to the English reader it is not hard to understand. The atmosphere indeed is very ancient: it demands imaginative effort; but the sympathy goes as we would wish it to go and the story tells itself. Only two points call for special comment.

The first is the name of the play.* The other two plays are called *Electra*, after the chief character: this is called *Choëphoroe*, or *Libation-Bearers*, after the Chorus. For in truth the subjects are not, artistically speaking, quite the same. The main interest of the other plays is to describe how the woman Electra felt and acted with regard to the murder of her mother and stepfather; in this play it is to narrate how Agamemnon, the long dead, was awakened to help his children to avenge him. The ghosts in Homer could not speak till they had drunk the blood of sacrifice. Somewhat in the same way the dead Agamemnon here cannot gather his dim senses till the drink-offerings have sunk into his grave. The wine and milk and honey reach his parched lips. He stirs in his sleep, and in that one moment of hesitating consciousness there are crowded upon him all those appeals that have most power to rouse and sting. The first words spoken in prayer at his neglected tomb; the call for vengeance sent, as it were, unknowingly by the murderess; the repeated story of his old wrongs and the outrage done upon his body; above all, the voices of his desolate children crying to him for that which he himself craves.

* I adopt this traditional Latin transliteration in preference to "Choephori." Cf. Terence's *Adelphoe*. For readers without Greek I may mention that the word has four syllables, first the syllable "Co," then "E for E."

There is no visible apparition from the tomb, as there is, for instance, in the *Persae*. But as the great litany grows in intensity of longing, the dead seem to draw nearer to the living, and conviction comes to the mourners, one after another, that he who was once King of Kings is in power among them. Where in all literature, except Aeschylus, could one find this union of primitive ghostliness with high intellectual passion? One hand seems to reach out to the African or Polynesian, while the other clasps that of Milton or Goethe.

Another point which the hasty reader might overlook is the psychological treatment of Orestes. At the end of the play, of course, he goes mad. That is in the legend. But from quite the early scenes—much of the prologue happens to be lost—the shadow of the coming darkness begins to show itself. And the occasion for it is always the same, the conflict between two horrors which are also duties: the murder of his mother on one side, and on the other disobedience to the command of God.

Here, as in most cases, the development of Greek tragedy moves almost straight from Aeschylus to Euripides, with Sophocles standing aside. The character of Orestes, in particular, contains here in germ just the ideas that are so subtly developed in Euripides. The first study is grander, tenderer, and more heroic; the second, of course, more detailed and varied and more finely poignant. There is a typical difference between the two poets in the way in which Orestes' last scruples are overcome. In Euripides a whole scene is given up to it. Orestes is shaken by the first sight of his mother in the distance, and actually rebels against

the god or devil who has commanded him to kill her, till he is overborne by the scorn and passion of Electra's more bitter nature. In Aeschylus Orestes' scruple breaks out in the midst of the Invocation and is swept away, not specially by Electra, but by the whole great swelling rhythm of that litany of revenge.

Of the other characters, Electra in Euripides bears the main weight of the tragedy on her own shoulders. In Aeschylus she is much less minutely and without doubt less cruelly studied: almost all her words are beautiful, and she keeps a kind of tenderness even in her prayers of hate. She hates her oppressors and her father's enemies; but the hate is based on love, and it has not eaten into her nor left her poisoned. Clytemnestra, though she appears only for two short scenes, preserves still the almost superhuman grandeur which was hers in the *Agamemnon*. Her simplest word has power to arrest the attention; and while she is present other people seem small and their emotions ordinary. Her own emotions lie deep and complex, fold behind fold. It is shallow to dismiss her as a hypocrite, feigning grief at the death of the son whom she fears. The hypocrisy is there, but so is the sorrow; so are all kinds of unspoken memories and hopes and depths of experience. Always the thing she says, fine as it is, leaves the impression that there is something greater that she does not care to say. Even when she calls for the axe of battle to face her son, she has room for a thought beyond the immediate fight for dear life: "To that meseemeth we are come, we two!" That touch is like Euripides, but on the whole this heroine was a figure not in Euripides' style and perhaps not within his range.

He made a Clytemnestra deliberately and utterly different.

The date of Sophocles' play is unknown. But the *Choëphoroe* was produced in 458 B.C., and Euripides' *Electra* in 413. The forty-five years that separate them were years of very rapid artistic development. The *Choëphoroe* has both an archaic beauty and a stark grimness of speech which divide it from its two companions. There are fewer details, and attention is never long distracted from the central tragedy. At point after point of the action it is easy to show how the two later poets refined and developed the plain lines of Aeschylus, and exerted themselves to make the story more human and more probable. The comparison tempts one to reflect how little such technical improvements really matter, and how dangerously near to nothingness, in the last resort, are the ingenuities of realism. This play produces its illusion quite sufficiently by its mere grandeur and intensity. Yet, judged on its own archaic level, it shows remarkable skill in construction, just as, amid its story of relentless revenge, it conveys a great sense of compassion. The prologue itself is very skilful. With the last lines of the *Agamemnon* still ringing in our minds we see, as the play opens, a young man standing with shorn hair beside a grave mound; and half the story is told in a flash. Nor, apart from the marvellous invocation scene itself, would it be easy to find in Greek drama another play with such varied moments as the prayer of Electra, the entry of the poor, loving, half-ridiculous Nurse, the sudden onrush of the single terrified slave calling for help to the Women's House; above all, the amazing scene at the end with the blood-stained robe, the gathering of the unseen

Furies, the last struggle of Orestes' reason, and the flight of the would-be Saviour as one Accursed, never to rest again. The final words of the Chorus ask the question which is to be answered, or at least attempted, in the *Eumenides*.

THE EUMENIDES

The law that "The doer must suffer," or that Sin must bring Punishment, is mainly envisaged by the most primitive Greek tradition as a form of the blood-feud. It is blood calling for blood. At its simplest this takes the form of a straightforward vendetta, as when a man kills one of another tribe. There is no "sin" or "pollution" in this, though of course the kindred of the stranger will duly try to avenge him. Suppose, next, that a man kills, not a stranger, but his own kinsman. Then he has shed the "kindred blood," and committed a real sin. He is polluted, and pollutes all who associate with him. He must disappear out of the community, and never be seen or heard again, whether by death or voluntary exile matters little. Otherwise, if the kinsman has left any children or male representatives, they are bound in honour to take up the blood-feud and do vengeance, even though, if the relationship is very close, it may bring pollution on them. Thus Aegisthus, as son of Thyestes, acted quite correctly in killing Agamemnon, and Orestes in killing him. Similarly, when Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon the eternal law compelled Orestes to avenge him, however reluctantly.

But suppose there is no avenger left, what then? It is one of the fears that torment Orestes in Euripides'

Electra, "Who will do justice on me, when she is dead?" In that case, though there is no visible human avenger, the Law nevertheless acts. The doer must suffer. That is *Dikê*, Justice. It is the law of Themis, of Moira, of the Erinyes, and ultimately of Mother Earth. Let us consider each of these conceptions separately.

Themis, as the late Dr. Jane Harrison has shown, is the correct tribal custom, the thing that is always done—always, that is, by the people who really know. When prodigies or portents occur and ordinary people do not know what to do, you naturally consult the Elders of the tribe, the Gerontes, who have most experience of past emergencies and most knowledge of precedent. If they also fail you, you must needs go for guidance to those older still, the Chthonian or "Earthy" people, the great ancestors who give oracles from their graves, deep in the bosom of the soil. They of necessity know what is really Themis, and that is why Themis presides at Delphi.

Moira is commonly translated "fate," but strictly it is the "portion" allotted to each man, his task in the common labour, his share in the common prize or harvest. For portions are allotted to us before our birth. A man may not evade his own portion; he must not trespass on that of another. The conception enables us to understand how Plato, when searching for Righteousness, finds it in a city where all classes and all citizens perform in full their due service and receive in full their due portion. The Moirai, when personified, are the Assigners or Apportioners of man's lot in life; and if the gods too have their separate reigns or attributes, as for instance Zeus has the earth

and sky, Poseidon the sea, and Hades the darkness beneath the earth, that division also is the work of the Moirai.

And the Erinyes. They are the wrath of the dead or the injured acting as a curse and pursuing the transgressor. Orestes, in the *Choëphoroe*, sees them as "his mother's wrathful hounds." In this play we see Clytemnestra waken them when they have fallen asleep. They are obedient to her wrath, for they are her wrath in personal form. And such wrath, though chiefly conceived as the blood-feud of the murdered, can be roused by any *Hubris* or overstepping of Moira. There is wrath in heaven, says a Greek proverb, for an injured dog. In the *Agamemnon* the Erinyes avenge the vulture whose nest has been robbed. And in the *Iliad*, at the great moment when Achilles' horse breaks into speech to warn his master of approaching death, the Erinyes "check his voice" (*Il.*, xix. 418). The horse, however well-intentioned, was obviously transgressing his Moira.

So far we can follow the ancient ideas without much difficulty. But it is rather a surprise to the modern to find Mother Earth among the supreme authorities for executing this law. It is because Earth is the home of the dead, the Chthonian people, both the great ancestors who know what is Themis and "the wronged ones in the darkness" who cry for justice on their oppressors. Their wrath is her wrath. Besides that, whenever kindred blood is shed the intolerable stain falls first and most directly on the face of Mother Earth. It pollutes her, and she sends up her punishments from below, blight and barrenness and plague, just as to the innocent in

normal times she sends life and fruitfulness. Thus we see that blessing as well as cursing lies in the power of the Chthonian people, the dead, the Erinyes, and collectively of Mother Earth. They who send can also withhold.

The law that "The doer shall suffer" is a natural law like the maturing of seed, or the return of spring; most of all like the growth and diminishing every year of the power of the Sun. For that diminishing is really a punishment due to the *Hubris* which the Sun committed when at his height. There are suggestions occasionally that, since every living thing has its own Moira, one Moira might conceivably interfere with another, just as sometimes God may prevent the seed from maturing (*Agamemnon*, l. 1025). But in the main the rule that blood calls for blood, that *Hubris* is followed by *Dikê*, or that sin brings punishment, stands as an unbroken natural law, and the Erinyes are its especial guardians.

That being so, how can there be any forgiveness? Would not forgiveness be a sort of monstrosity, a wanton breach in the law of Cause and Effect? Aeschylus, in the *Agamemnon*, gives his answer in unusually clear language (161–182). The prophet Calchas has been describing the ravenous feast of the two Eagles; the wrath of Artemis thereat and the vengeance exacted in the death of Iphigenîa; the future vengeance to be exacted for that death; and beyond a yet further vista of vengeances re-avenged. Then Aeschylus asks how man can find escape from this endless chain and "cast off from his mind the burden of futility." "Only," he answers, "in the thought of Zeus, whatever Zeus may be." It is a

Zeus sublimated by the mind of Aeschylus and very different from that glorified Achaean chieftain who was King of gods and men in the ordinary Homeric tradition. To Aeschylus Zeus, as the ruler of heaven, is the founder of a new world, much as Athens herself was the founder of a new civilization on earth. The old gods struck and were stricken; they fought and they passed away. One had no more meaning than another. But Zeus is "He who made a road to Thought, who established Learning by Suffering to be an abiding law." He himself in the distant past won his throne by violence, but now he has learned and his heart is changed.

This idea of a supreme Ruler who, though inscrutably wise, is not perfect but only working his way towards perfection, was developed by Aeschylus in the Prometheus-trilogy, where Zeus, beginning as a conqueror and a tyrant, seems at first like the villain of the piece. But he possesses the peculiar power of being able to learn by his own offences; and thus the end of the trilogy is reconciliation. Similarly in the *Supplices* we hear how Io, once the persecuted victim of his lust, is at last led to peace and blessedness and becomes the Virgin Mother of the Deliverer of Prometheus.* The idea is not purely Aeschylean, for Pindar also tells us how Eternal Zeus set free his chained enemies, the Titans (*Pyth.*, iv. 291). It is also he who instituted the law of the suppliant. He forgave the blood-stained Ixîon because of his suffering and prayer. Nay, he is not only the protector of suppliants, he is himself the Eternal Suppliant, the God and Master of all things, who forgives because

* See *Rise of the Greek Epic*, Edn. 3, p. 276 ff.

he also craves for forgiveness (*Supplices*, l. 1). There, however, we touch upon a mystery. . . . The essential point is that the Zeus who learns and understands is also the Zeus who can forgive the sinner. He can forgive just because he understands. The Law of the Moirai and the Erinyes neither understands not forgives. It simply operates.

"All this," it may be said, "is possible enough, but it is not what Aeschylus represents as occurring. Zeus does not appear at all in the *Eumenides*." Of course he does not. The Greek convention, like our own, did not easily represent the Supreme Father in bodily form on the stage. Apart from satyr-plays and comedy, I only know of one play, *The Soul-Weighing* of Aeschylus, in which Zeus was actually represented; and there he appeared not on the stage but in the sky, holding the scales of the divine balance. In the *Eumenides* he is represented by his son and daughter, Apollo and Athena.

Apollo, we are told expressly, is "the *Prophêtês Dios*, the revealer of Zeus" (19). He says himself, "Never have I spoken on my throne of prophecy any word concerning man, woman, or city, which was not commanded by Zeus the Father" (616). He warns the Court to "follow the All-Father's will," and not to disregard the oracles "that are mine and the Father's" (713). Consequently we see that it was by the will of Zeus himself that Orestes slew his mother, it is Zeus who wills now that he be set free.

Athena likewise, we are told with emphasis, is the daughter of Zeus alone, with no mother. She is pure, undiluted Zeus (664 ff.). She is, so to speak, his Thought, not born by any bodily process, but sprung

directly from his brain (665); and when she gives her vote it is not so much that she votes on the side of Zeus but that her judgment inevitably is the same as his, "for I am utterly the Father's" (738). When she asks the Furies to yield to the will of Zeus she says, "I also trust and obey him. I know his overwhelming strength, but he needs it not!" (826). And she explains that Zeus has given to her just that power of thinking and understanding (τὸ φρονεῖν) to which we were told in the *Agamemnon* that he was guiding mankind. Thus the mechanical and automatic operation of the Law is corrected by the will of the Father. It is not broken, but more truly and perfectly fulfilled.

One is reminded of a passage in Plato's *Statesman*: "The best of all is not that a law should rule, but a man, if the man be wise and of royal nature. . . . A law can never comprehend exactly what is noblest and most just for all cases, and consequently cannot enjoin what is best. The infinite varieties of men and circumstances, and the fact that nothing human ever for a moment stands still, make it impossible for any art to lay down a simple rule to hold universally and for all time. . . . But that is what we see the law aiming at, like some stubborn and ignorant man who will allow nothing to be done against his orders and no further questions to be asked. . . ." (p. 294*a*).

Equally near to Aeschylus is Aristotle's famous discussion of the difference between legal justice and that higher justice which he calls *Epieikeia* (Equity). "It is the correction of the law where it fails owing to its generality" (*Ethics*, v. p. 1137*b*, 26), and the correction has to be applied by the "wise man." In Aeschylus, as in these two philosophers, the ultimate

justice is to be found in an appeal from a law to a person.

This appeal plays an important rôle in the history of Greek thought, and consequently in that of all modern Europe. The other philosophic schools of the Hellenistic Age, Cynic, Stoic, and Epicurean, made even greater use than Plato and Aristotle of the idea of the Wise Man, rather than the Law, as the judge and embodiment of right conduct. In a grosser form the idea invaded practical politics. We find the Hellenistic world escaping from the conflict of constitutions and systems of law by the deification of Alexander and his successors, and cutting its juridical knots by the legal fiction of the divine will. Nay, even before Aeschylus set to work upon it, the same conception was really implicit in the anthropomorphism of the classical Olympian religion. As I have tried to show elsewhere,* the great advance made by that system as compared with the welter of primitive taboos and terrors which it tried, however artificially and inadequately, to supersede, lies in this same humanizing of the non-human. It brought to man the Good News that, as Plutarch expresses it, "the world is not ruled by fabulous Typhons and Giants"—nor, we may add, by blind mechanical laws—"but by One who is a wise Father to all." It sought to make religion humane at the expense of making it anthropomorphic.

It is more interesting still to realize that the Aeschylean doctrine is in essence an early and less elaborate stage of the theological system which we associate with St. Paul: the suppression of the Law

* *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, Chapter II.

by a personal relation to a divine person, and a consequent disregard for the crude coarse test of a man's "works" or "deeds" in comparison with the one unfailing test of the spirit, its "faith" or "faithfulness" towards God. Aeschylus would have understood Paul's exhortation to escape beyond the "beggarly elements" to Him who made them, beyond the Creation to the Creator; and Paul would have understood Aeschylus' insistence on the forgiveness of the suppliant, that is, of him who trusts and repents and prays. It is noteworthy, indeed, that Paul made one great concession to primitive thought which Aeschylus had entirely rejected. When Orestes is pardoned by the will of Zeus, the Furies yield; the Law is deemed to be satisfied; there is no talk of its demanding to be paid off with another victim. But in Paul, when man is to be forgiven, the sin still claims its punishment, the blood will still have blood; and the only way to appease it is for the Divine King, himself or his son, to "die for the people." Thus the pollution is cleansed and sin duly paid with blood, though it happens to be the blood of the innocent. Aeschylus, as a poet, was familiar with that conception. He knew how Codrus died, and Menoikeus and Macaria, how Agamemnon and Erechtheus and other kings had given their children to die. But for him such practices belonged to that primitive and barbaric world which Hellenic Zeus had swept away, so he hoped, for ever.

A modern reader is more likely to ask why, if Orestes only fulfilled the command of Zeus, he should be punished at all. Why is there any talk of suffering and forgiveness? The answer is quite straight-

forward. He has after all broken the Law; he has offended against Themis and Moira, and he must suffer. In modern language, a man who kills his mother, even if he is amply justified in doing so, is bound to suffer acute grief and distress; if he did not, he would really deserve to be punished. It is only in the end that Zeus can overrule and make good, just as he did with Io and with Prometheus. It is in the end, after suffering and struggle, after cleansing and supplication, that union is achieved between the Law which acts like blind fate and the Father who understands.*

Thus at last the offender who deserves pardon can be pardoned. But that is not all. The Law that is directed and put in force by one who can pardon and understand can itself be understood and loved. Its ministers are no longer alien and hostile beings, proud of the agonies which they righteously inflict and the hatred which they naturally inspire. They are accepted by Athena as fellow-citizens, and their Law recognized not as an external system of punishments, but as an inward aspiration, a standard of right living which men consciously need and seek. The "Furies" have become "Eumenides."

* See the last verses of the play. On the political circumstances which gave point to the poet's doctrine of Reconciliation see note on vv. 682 and 864.

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AGAMEMNON

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

AGAMEMNON, *son of Atreus and King of Argos and Mycenae; Commander-in-Chief of the Greek armies in the War against Troy.*

CLYTEMNESTRA, *daughter of Tyndareus, sister of Helen; wife to Agamemnon.*

AIGISTHOS, *son of Thyestes, cousin and blood-enemy to Agamemnon, lover to Clytemnestra.*

CASSANDRA, *daughter of Priam, King of Troy, a prophetess; now slave to Agamemnon.*

A WATCHMAN.

A HERALD.

CHORUS of Argive Elders, faithful to Agamemnon.

CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN THE PLAY

MENELÂÜS, *brother to Agamemnon, husband of Helen, and King of Sparta. The two sons of Atreus are called the Atreidae.*

HELEN, *most beautiful of women; daughter of Tyndareus, wife to Menelâüs; beloved and carried off by Paris.*

PARIS, *son of Priam, King of Troy, lover of Helen. Also called* ALEXANDER.

PRIAM, *the aged King of Troy.*

The Greeks are also referred to as Achaians, Argives, Danaans; Troy is also called Ilion.

The play was produced in the archonship of Philocles (458 B.C.). *The first prize was won by Aeschylus with the "Agamemnon," "Choëphoroe," "Eumenides," and the Satyr Play "Proteus."*

THE AGAMEMNON

The Scene represents a space in front of the Palace of Agamemnon in Argos, with an Altar of Zeus in the centre and many other altars at the sides. On a high terrace of the roof stands a WATCHMAN. *It is night.*

WATCHMAN.

GOD grant us rest from labour! A long year
I have kept this vigil, lying with pricked ear,
As a dog lies, above the Atreidae's hall,
Till well I know yon midnight festival
Of swarming stars, and them that lonely go,
Bearers to man of summer and of snow,
The heavenly Masters, throned in burning sky.
I have watched them as they rise, and as they die.
But still I await the beacon that must tell
Of Ilion's fall and flash o'erseas the swell
Of conquering voices. Hope untameable
Is here, and a man's heart in woman's breast.
And when I turn me to my rest—my rest
Dew-drenched and dark and stumbling, to which near
Cometh no dream nor sleep, but alway Fear
Breathes round it, warning, lest an eye once fain
To close may close too well to wake again;
Think I perchance to sing or troll a tune
For medicine against sleep, the music soon

Changes to sighing for the tale untold
Of this house, not well mastered as of old.
Howbeit, may God yet send us rest, and light
The flame of good news flashed across the night.

[*He is silent, watching. Suddenly at a distance in the night there is a glimmer of fire, increasing presently to a blaze.*

Ha!
O kindler of the dark, O daylight birth
Of dawn and dancing upon Argive earth
For this great end! All hail!—What ho, within!
What ho! Bear word to Agamemnon's queen
To rise, like dawn, and lift in answer strong
To this glad lamp her women's triumph-song,
If verily, verily, Ilion's citadel
Is fallen, as yon beacons flaming tell.
And I myself will tread the dance before
All others; for my master's dice I score
Good, and mine own to-night three sixes plain.

[*Lights begin to show in the Palace.*

Oh, good or ill, my hand shall clasp again
My dear lord's hand, returning! Beyond that
I speak not. A great ox hath laid him flat
Across my tongue. But these stone walls know well,
If stones had speech, what tale were theirs to tell.
For me, to him that knoweth I can yet
Speak; if another questions I forget.

[*Exit into the Palace. The women's "Ololûgê," or triumph-cry, is heard within and then repeated again and again further off in the City. Handmaids and Attendants come*

from the Palace, bearing torches, with which they kindle incense on the altars. Among them comes CLYTEMNESTRA, *who throws herself on her knees at the central Altar in an agony of prayer.*

Presently from the further side of the open space appear the CHORUS *of* ELDERS *and move gradually into position in front of the Palace. The day begins to dawn.*

CHORUS.

'Tis the tenth year's dawn since first outspoke
The great Arraigner of Priam's pride,
Menelâüs and eke Agamemnon, yoke
Of brethren joined in worship wide,
Two thrones, two sceptres, linkèd of God;
And a thousand galleys long
From coasts of Argos the sea-ways trod
In War for the Righting of Wrong.
And wrath of battle about them cried,
As vultures cry,
Whose nest is plundered, and up they fly
In anguish lonely, eddying wide,
Great wings like oars in the waste of sky;
For their work is gone; no more they keep
Watch o'er the vulture babes asleep.
But One there is who heareth on high—
Some Pan or Zeus, some seer Apollo—
That keen bird-throated suffering cry
Of the stranger wronged in God's own sky;
And sendeth down, for the law transgressed,
The Wrath of the Feet that follow.

So Zeus, who Watcheth o'er Friend and Friend,
Zeus who Prevaileth, in after quest

For one belovèd by many men
On Paris sent the Atreidae twain;
Yea, sent him dances before the end
For his bridal cheer,
Wrestlings heavy and limbs forspent
For Greek and Trojan, the knee earth-bent,
The bloody dust and the broken spear.
He knoweth, that which is here is here,
And that which shall be followeth near;
He seeketh God with a great desire,
He heaps his gifts, he essays his pyre
With torch below and with oil above,
With tears, but never the wrath shall move
Of the Altar cold that rejects his fire.

We saw the Avengers go that day,
And they left us here; for our flesh is old
And serveth not; and these staves uphold
A strength like the strength of a child at play.
For the sap that springs in the young man's hand
And the valour of age, they have left the land.
And the passing old, while the dead leaf blows
And the old staff gropeth his three-foot way,
Weak as a babe and alone he goes,
A dream in the noon astray.

[*Coming near the Central Altar they see* CLYTEMNESTRA, *who is still rapt in prayer.*

But thou, O daughter of Tyndareus,
Queen Clytemnestra, what need? What news?
What tale or tiding hath stirred thy mood
To send forth word upon all our ways
For incensed worship? Of every god

That guards the city, the deep, the high,
Gods of the mart, gods of the sky,
The altars blaze;
One here, one there,
To the skyey night the firebrands flare,
Drunk with the soft and guileless spell
Of balm of kings from the inmost cell.
Tell, O Queen—and reject us not—
All that can or that may be told,
And healer be to this aching thought,
Which one time hovereth, evil-cold,
And then from the fires thou kindlest
Will Hope be kindled, and hungry Care
Fall back for a little while, nor tear
The heart that beateth below my breast.

[CLYTEMNESTRA *rises silently, as though unconscious of their presence, and goes into the House. The* CHORUS *take position and begin their first Stasimon, or Standing-song.*

CHORUS.

(*The sign seen on the way; Eagles tearing a hare with young.*)

It is ours to tell of the Sign of the War-way given
By God to men more strong,
(For a life that is kin unto ours yet breathes from heaven
A spell, a Strength of Song:)
How the twin-throned Might of Achaia, one Crown divided
Above all Greeks that are,

With avenging hand and spear upon Troy was guided
By the Bird of War.
'Twas a king among birds to each of the Kings of the Sea,
One eagle black, one black but of fire-white tail,
By the House, on the Spear-hand, in station that all might see;
And they tore a hare, and the life in her womb that grew,
Yea, the life unlived and the races unrun they slew
Sorrow, sing sorrow: but good prevail, prevail!

(*How Calchas read the sign; his Vision of the Future.*)

And the War-seer wise, as he looked on the Atreïd Yoke
Of Kings twain-tempered, knew
Those fierce hare-renders the lords of his host; and spoke,
Reading the omen true.
"At the last, the last, this Hunt hunteth Ilion down,
Yea, and before the wall
Violent division the fullness of land and town
Shall waste withal;
If only God's eye gloom not against our gates,
Till the great War-curb of Troy, fore-smitten, fail!
For Pity lives, and those wingèd hounds she hates,
Which tore in the Trembler's body the unborn beast.
Yea, Artemis abhorreth the eagles' feast."
Sorrow, sing sorrow: but good prevail, prevail!

(He prays to Artemis to grant the fulfilment of the Sign, but, as his vision increases, he is afraid and calls on Paian, the Healer, to hold her back.)

"Thou beautiful One, thou tender lover
Of the dewy breath of the Lion's child;
Thou the delight, through den and cover,
Of the young life at the breast of the wild,
Yet, oh, fulfill, fulfill the sign of the Eagles' Kill!
Be the vision accepted, albeit horrible. . . .
But I-ê, I-ê! Stay her, O Paian, stay!
For lo, upon other evil her heart she setteth,
Long wastes of wind, held ship and unventured sea,
On, on, till another Shedding of Blood be wrought:
They kill but feast not; they pray not; the law is broken;
Strife in the flesh; a bride that obeyeth not;
And beyond, beyond, there abideth in wrath re-awoken—
It plotteth, it haunteth the house, yea, it never for-getteth—
Wrath for a child to be."
So Calchas, reading the wayside eagles' sign,
Spake to the Kings, blessings and words of bale;
And like his song be thine,
Sorrow, sing sorrow: but good prevail, prevail!

(Such religion belongs to old and barbarous gods, ana brings no peace. I turn to Zeus, who has shown man how to Learn by Suffering.)

Zeus! Zeus, whate'er He be,
If this name He love to hear
This He shall be called of me.
Searching earth and sea and air

Refuge nowhere can I find
Save Him only, if my mind
Will cast off before it die
The burden of this vanity.

One there was who reigned of old,
Big with wrath to brave and blast,
Lo, his name is no more told!
And who followed met at last
His Third-thrower, and is gone.
Only they whose hearts have known
Zeus, the Conqueror and the Friend,
They shall win their vision's end;

Zeus the Guide, who made man turn
Thought-ward, Zeus, who did ordain
Man by Suffering shall Learn.
So the heart of him, again
Aching with remembered pain,
Bleeds and sleepeth not, until
Wisdom comes against his will.
'Tis the gift of One by strife
Lifted to the throne of life.

(AGAMEMNON *accepted the sign. Then came long delays and storm while the fleet lay at Aulis.*)

So that day the Elder Lord,
Marshal of the Achaian ships,
Strove not with the prophet's word,
Bowed him to his fate's eclipse,
When with empty jars and lips

Parched and seas impassable
Fate on that Greek army fell,
Fronting Chalcis as it lay,
By Aulis in the swirling bay.

(*Till at last Calchas answered that Artemis was wroth and demanded the death of* AGAMEMNON'S *daughter. The King's doubt and grief.*)

And winds, winds blew from Strymon River,
Unharboured, starving, winds of baulked endeavour,
Man-blinding, pitiless to cord and bulwark,
And the waste of days was made long, more long,
Till the flower of Argos was aghast and withered;
Then through the storm rose the War-seer's song,
And told of medicine that should tame the tempest,
But bow the Princes to a direr wrong.
Then "Artemis" he whispered, he named the name;
And the brother Kings they shook in the hearts of them,
And smote on the earth their staves, and the tears came.

But the King, the elder, hath found voice and spoken:
"A heavy doom, sure, if God's will were broken;
But to slay mine own child, who my house delighteth,
Is that not heavy? That her blood should flow
On her father's hand, hard beside an altar?
My path is sorrow wheresoe'er I go.
Shall Agamemnon fail his ships and people,
And the hosts of Hellas melt as melts the snow?
They cry, they thirst, for a death that shall break the spell,

For a virgin's blood: 'tis a rite of old, men tell.
And they burn with longing.—O God may the end
be well!"

(*But ambition drove him, till he consented to the sin of slaying his daughter, Iphigenîa, as a sacrifice.*)

To that which Must Be he subdued him slowly,
And a strange wind within his bosom tossed,
A wind of dark thought, unclean, unholy,
Till he rose up, daring to the uttermost.
For men are boldened by a Blindness, straying
Toward base desire, which brings grief hereafter,
Yea, and itself is grief;
So this man hardened to his own child's slaying,
As help to avenge him for a woman's laughter
And bring his ships relief!

Her "Father, Father," her sad cry that lingered,
Her virgin heart's breath they held all as naught,
Those bronze-clad witnesses and battle-hungered;
And there they prayed, and when the prayer was
wrought
He charged the young men to uplift and bind her,
As ye lift a wild kid, high above the altar,
Fierce-huddling forward, fallen, clinging sore
To the robe that wrapt her; yea, he bids them hinder
The sweet mouth's utterance, the cries that falter,
—His curse for evermore!—

With violence and a curb's voiceless wrath.
Her stole of saffron then to the ground she threw,
And her eye with an arrow of pity found its path
To each man's heart that slew:

A face in a picture, striving amazedly;
The little maid who danced at her father's board,
The innocent voice man's love came never nigh,
Who joined to his her little paean-cry
When the third cup was poured. . . .

What came thereafter I saw not, neither tell.
But the craft of Calchas failed not.—'Tis written, He
Who Suffereth Shall Learn; the law holdeth well.
And that which is to be,
Ye will know at last; why weep before the hour?
For come it shall, as out of darkness dawn.
Only may good from all this evil flower;
So prays this Heart of Argos, this frail tower
Guarding the land alone.

[*As they cease,* CLYTEMNESTRA *comes from the Palace with Attendants. She has finished her prayer and sacrifice, and is now wrought up to face the meeting with her husband. The Leader approaches her*

LEADER.

Before thy state, O Queen, I bow mine eyes.
'Tis written, when the man's throne empty lies,
The woman shall be honoured.—Hast thou heard
Some tiding sure? Or is it Hope hath stirred
To fire these altars? Dearly though we seek
To learn, 'tis thine to speak or not to speak.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Glad-voiced, the old saw telleth, comes this morn,
The Star-child of a dancing midnight born,
And beareth to thine ear a word of joy
Beyond all hope: the Greek hath taken Troy.

LEADER.

How?
Thy word flies past me, being incredible.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ilion is ours. No riddling tale I tell.

LEADER.

Such joy comes knocking at the gate of tears.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, 'tis a faithful heart that eye declares.

LEADER.

What warrant hast thou? Is there proof of this?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

There is; unless a God hath lied there is.

LEADER.

Some dream-shape came to thee in speaking guise?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Who deemeth me a dupe of drowsing eyes?

LEADER.

Some word within that hovereth without wings?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Am I a child to hearken to such things?

LEADER.

Troy fallen?—But how long? When fell she, say?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The very night that mothered this new day.

LEADER.

And who of heralds with such fury came?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A Fire-god, from Mount Ida scattering flame.
Whence starting, beacon after beacon burst
In flaming message hitherward. Ida first
Told Hermes' Lemnian Rock, whose answering sign
Was caught by towering Athos, the divine,
With pines immense—yea, fishes of the night
Swam skyward, drunken with that leaping light,
Which swelled like some strange sun, till dim and far
Makistos' watchmen marked a glimmering star;
They, nowise loath nor idly slumber-won,
Spring up to hurl the fiery message on,
And a far light beyond the Eurîpus tells
That word hath reached Messapion's sentinels.
They beaconed back, then onward with a high
Heap of dead heather flaming to the sky.
And onward still, not failing nor aswoon,
Across the Asôpus like a beaming moon
The great word leapt, and on Kithairon's height
Uproused a new relay of racing light.
His watchers knew the wandering flame, nor hid
Their welcome, burning higher than was bid.
Out over Lake Gorgôpis then it floats,
To Aigiplanctos, waking the wild goats,
Crying for "Fire, more Fire!" And fire was reared,
Stintless and high, a stormy streaming beard,

That waved in flame beyond the promontory
Rock-ridged, that watches the Saronian sea,
Kindling the night; then one short swoop to catch
The Spider's Crag, our city's tower of watch;
Whence hither to the Atreidae's roof it came,
A light true-fathered of Idaean flame.
Torch-bearer after torch-bearer, behold
The tale thereof in stations manifold,
Each one by each made perfect ere it passed,
And Victory in the first as in the last.
These be my proofs and tokens that my lord
From Troy hath spoke to me a burning word.

LEADER.

Woman, speak on. Hereafter shall my prayer
Be raised to God; now let me only hear,
Again and full, the marvel and the joy.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now, even now, the Achaian holdeth Troy!
Methinks there is a crying in her streets
That makes no concord. When sweet unguent meets
With vinegar in one cup, I warrant none
Shall lay those wranglers lovingly at one.
So conquerors and conquered shalt thou hear,
Two sundered tones, two lives of joy or fear.
Here women in the dust about their slain,
Husband or brethren, and by dead old men
Children, now slave, who yesterday were free,
For all they loved on earth cry desolately.
And hard beside them war-stained Greeks, whom stark
Battle and then long searching through the dark

Hath gathered, ravenous, in the dawn, to feast
At last on all the plenty Troy possessed,
No portion in that feast nor ordinance,
But each man clutching at the prize of chance.
Aye, there at last under good roofs they lie
Of men spear-quelled, no frosts beneath the sky,
No watches more, no bitter moony dew. . . .
How blessèd they will sleep the whole night through!
Oh, if these days they keep them free from sin
Toward Ilion's conquered shrines and Them within
Who watch unconquered, maybe not again
The smiter shall be smit, the taker ta'en.
May God but grant there fall not on that host
The greed of gold that maddeneth and the lust
To spoil inviolate things! The homeward race
Is yet unrun, from goal to starting place.
Yea, though of God they pass unchallengèd,
Methinks the wrong of those forgotten dead
Might waken, groping for its will. . . .
Ye hear
A woman's word, belike a woman's fear.
May good but conquer in the last incline
Of the balance! Of all prayers that prayer is mine.

LEADER.

O Woman, like a man faithful and wise
Thou speakest. I accept thy testimonies
And turn to God with praising, for a gain
Is won this day that pays for all our pain.

[CLYTEMNESTRA *returns to the Palace. The* CHORUS *take up their position for the Second Stasimon.*

An Elder.

O Zeus, All-ruler, and Night the Aid,
Gainer of glories, how hast thou thrown
Over the towers of Ilion
Thy net close-laid,
That none so nimble and none so tall
Shall escape the snare that enslaveth all!

Another.

And Zeus, who Watcheth o'er Friend and Friend,
I also praise, who hath wrought this end.
Long since on Paris his shaft he drew,
And hath aimed full true,
Not too soon falling nor yet too far,
The fire of the avenging star.

Chorus.

(*This is God's judgement upon Troy. May it not be too fierce! Gold cannot save one who spurneth Justice.*)

The stroke of Zeus hath found them! Clear this day
The tale, and plain to trace.
He judged, and Troy hath fallen.—And have men said
That God not deigns to mark man's hardihead,
Trampling to earth the grace
Of holy and delicate things?—Sin lies that way.
For visibly Pride doth breed its own return
On prideful men, who, when their houses swell
With happy wealth, breathe ever wrath and blood.
Yet not too fierce let the due vengeance burn;

Only as deemeth well
One wise of mood.

Never shall state nor gold
Shelter his heart from aching
Whoso the Altar of Justice old
Spurneth to Night unwaking.

(*The Sinner suffers in his longing till at last Temptation overcomes him; as longing for Helen overcame Paris.*)

The tempting of misery forceth him, the dread
Child of fore-scheming Woe!
And help is vain; the fell desire within
Is veilèd not, but shineth bright like Sin:
And as false gold will show
Black where the touchstone trieth, so doth fade
His honour in God's ordeal. Like a child,
Forgetting all, he hath chased a wingèd bird,
And planted amid his people a sharp thorn.
And no God hears his prayer, or, have they heard,
The man so base-beguiled
They cast to scorn.

Paris to Argos came;
Love of a woman led him;
So God's altar he brought to shame,
Robbing the hand that fed him.

(*Helen's flight; the visions seen by the King's seers; the phantom of Helen and the King's grief.*)

She hath left among her people a noise of shield and sword,
A tramp of men armèd where the long ships are moored;

She hath ta'en in her goings Desolation as a dower;
She hath stept, stept quickly, through the great gated tower,
And the thing that could not be, it hath been!
And the seers they saw visions, and they spoke of strange ill:
"A palace, a palace; and a great King thereof:
A bed, a bed empty, that was once pressed in love:
And thou, thou, what art thou? Let us be, thou so still,
Beyond wrath, beyond beseeching, to the lips reft of thee!"
For she whom he desireth is beyond the deep sea,
And a ghost in his castle shall be queen.

Images in sweet guise
Carven his soul denieth;
Starved in lack of the living eyes
All Aphrodîtê dieth.

(*His dreams and his suffering; but the War that he made caused greater and wider suffering.*)

But a shape that is a dream, 'mid the phantoms of the night,
Cometh near, full of tears, bringing vain vain delight:
For in vain when, desiring, he can feel the joy's breath
—Nevermore! Nevermore!—from his arms it vanisheth,
As a bird along the wind-ways of sleep.

In the mid castle hall, on the hearthstone of the Kings,
These griefs there be, and griefs passing these,
But in each man's dwelling of the host that sailed the seas,
A sad woman waits; she has thoughts of many things,
And patience in her heart lieth deep.

Yea, for though him she sent
Dearly her heart remembers,
Home, instead of the man that went,
Cometh an Urn and embers.

(*The return of the funeral urns: the murmurs of the People.*)

And the gold-changer, Ares, who changeth quick for dead,
Who poiseth his scale in the striving of the spears,
Back from Troy sendeth dust, heavy dust, wet with tears,
Sendeth ashes with men's names in his urns neatly spread.
And they weep over the men, and they praise them one by one,
How this was a wise fighter, and another nobly slain—
"Fighting to win back another's wife!"
Till a murmur is begun,
And there steals an angry pain
Against Kings too forward in the strife.

There by Ilion's gate
Many a soldier sleepeth,
Young men beautiful; fast in hate
Troy her conqueror keepeth.

(*For the Shedder of Blood is in great peril, and not unmarked by God. May I never be a Sacker of Cities!*)

But the rumour of the People, it is heavy, it is chill;
And tho' no curse be spoken, like a curse doth it brood.
And my heart waits some tiding which the dark holdeth still.
For of God not unmarked is the shedder of much blood.
And who conquers beyond right . . . Lo, the life of man decays;
There be Watchers dim his light in the wasting of the years;
He falls, he is forgotten, and hope dies.
There is peril in the praise
Over-praisèd that he hears;
For the thunder it is hurled from God's eyes.

Joy without hate be mine;
Not the conqueror's glory,
Not the dark where the captives pine,
Give to my life its story!

DIVERS ELDERS.

—The fire of good tidings it hath sped the city through,
But who knows if a god mocketh? Or who knows if all be true?

'Twere the fashion of a child,
Or a brain dream-beguiled,
To be kindled by the first
Torch's message as it burst,
And thereafter, as it dies, to die too.

—'Tis like a woman's sceptre, to ordain
Welcome to joy before the end is plain!

—Too lightly opened are a woman's ears;
Her fence downtrod by many trespassers,
And quickly crossed; but quickly lost
The burden of a woman's hopes or fears.

[*Here a break occurs in the action, like the descent of the curtain in a modern theatre. A space of some days is assumed to have passed and we find the Elders again assembled.*

LEADER.

Soon surely shall we read the message right;
Were fire and beacon-call and lamps of light
True speakers, or but happy lights that seem
And are not, like sweet voices in a dream?
I see a Herald yonder by the shore,
Shadowed with olive sprays. And from his sore
Rent raiment cries a witness from afar,
Dry Dust, born brother to the Mire of war,
That mute he comes not, neither through the smoke
Of mountain forests shall his tale be spoke;
But either shouting for a joyful day,
Or else. . . . But other thoughts I cast away.
As good hath dawned, may good shine on, we pray!

—And whoso for this City prayeth aught
Else, let him reap the harvest of his thought!

[*Enter the* HERALD, *running. His garments are torn and war-stained. He falls upon his knees and kisses the Earth, and salutes each Altar in turn.*

HERALD.

Land of my fathers! Argos! Am I here . .
Home, home at this tenth shining of the year,
And all Hope's anchors broken save this one!
For scarcely dared I dream, here in mine own
Argos at last to fold me to my rest. . . .
But now—All Hail, O Earth! O Sunlight blest!
And Zeus Most High!
[*Checking himself as he sees the altar of Apollo.*
And thou, O Pythian Lord;
No more on us be thy swift arrows poured!
Beside Scamander well we learned how true
Thy hate is. Oh, as thou art Healer too,
Heal us! As thou art Saviour of the Lost,
Save also us, Apollo, being so tossed
With tempest! . . . All ye Daemons of the Pale!
And Hermes! Hermes, mine own guardian, hail!
Herald beloved, to whom all heralds bow. . . .
Ye Blessèd Dead that sent us, receive now
In love your children whom the spear hath spared.
O House of Kings, O roof-tree thrice-endeared,
O solemn thrones! O gods that face the sun!
Now, now, if ever in the days foregone,
After these many years, with eyes that burn,
Give hail and glory to your King's return!

For Agamemnon cometh! A great light
Cometh to men and gods out of the night.
Grand greeting give him—aye, it need be grand—
Who, God's avenging mattock in his hand,
Hath wrecked Troy's towers and digged her soil beneath,
Till her gods' houses, they are things of death;
Her altars waste, and blasted every seed
Whence life might rise! So perfect is his deed,
So dire the yoke on Ilion he hath cast,
The first Atreides, King of Kings at last,
And happy among men! To whom we give
Honour most high above all things that live.
For Paris nor his guilty land can score
The deed they wrought above the pain they bore.
"Spoiler and thief," he heard God's judgement pass;
Whereby he lost his plunder, and like grass
Mowed down his father's house and all his land;
And Troy pays twofold for the sin she planned.

LEADER

Be glad, thou Herald of the Greek from Troy!

HERALD.

So glad I am, may God now let me die!

LEADER.

Did love of this land work thee such distress?

HERALD.

The tears stand in mine eyes for happiness.

LEADER.

Sweet sorrow was it, then, that on you fell.

HERALD.

How sweet? I cannot read thy parable.

LEADER.

To pine again for them that loved you true.

HERALD.

Did ye then pine for us, as we for you?

LEADER.

The whole land's heart was dark, and groaned for thee.

HERALD.

Dark? For what cause? Why should such darkness be?

LEADER.

Silence in wrong is our best medicine here.

HERALD.

Your kings were gone. What others need you fear?

LEADER.

'Tis past! Like thee now, I could gladly die.

HERALD.

Even so! 'Tis past, and all is victory.
And, for our life in those long years, there were
Doubtless some grievous days, and some were fair.
Who but a god goes woundless all his way? . .
Oh, could I tell the sick toil of the day,
The evil nights, scant decks ill-blanketed;
The rage and cursing when our daily bread
Came not! And then on land 'twas worse than all.

Our quarters close beneath the enemy's wall;
And rain—and from the ground the river dew—
Wet, always wet! Into our clothes it grew,
Plague-like, and bred foul beasts in every hair.
Would I could tell how ghastly midwinter
Stole down from Ida till the birds fell dead!
Or the still heat, when on his noonday bed
The breathless blue sea sank without a wave! . . .
Why think of it? They are past and in the grave,
All those long troubles. For I think the slain
Care little if they sleep or rise again;
And we, the living, wherefore should we ache
With counting all our lost ones, till we wake
The old malignant fortunes? If Good-bye
Comes from their side, Why, let them go, say I.
Surely for us, who live, good doth prevail
Unchallenged, with no wavering of the scale;
Wherefore we vaunt unto these shining skies,
As wide o'er sea and land our glory flies:
"By men of Argolis who conquered Troy,
These spoils, a memory and an ancient joy,
Are nailed in the gods' houses throughout Greece."
Which whoso readeth shall with praise increase
Our land, our kings, and God's grace manifold
Which made these marvels be.—My tale is told.

LEADER.

Indeed thou conquerest me. Men say, the light
In old men's eyes yet serves to learn aright.
But Clytemnestra and the House should hear
These tidings first, though I their health may share.

[*During the last words* CLYTEMNESTRA *has entered from the Palace.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Long since I lifted up my voice in joy,
When the first messenger from flaming Troy
Spake through the dark of sack and overthrow.
And mockers chid me: "Because beacons show
On the hills, must Troy be fallen? Quickly born
Are women's hopes!" Aye, many did me scorn;
Yet gave I sacrifice; and by my word
Through all the city our woman's cry was heard,
Lifted in blessing round the seats of God,
And slumbrous incense o'er the altars glowed
In fragrance.

But for thee, what need to tell
Thy further tale? My lord himself shall well
Instruct me. Yet, to give my lord and king
All reverent greeting at his homecoming—
What dearer dawn on woman's eyes can flame
Than this, which casteth wide her gate to acclaim
The husband whom God leadeth safe from war?—
Go, bear my lord this prayer: That fast and far
He haste him to this town which loves his name;
And in his castle may he find the same
Wife that he left, a watchdog of the hall,
True to one voice and fierce to others all;
A body and soul unchanged, no seal of his
Broke in the waiting years.—No thought of ease
Nor joy from other men hath touched my soul,
Nor shall touch, until bronze be dyed like wool.

LEADER.

A boast so faithful and so plain, I wot,
Spoke by a royal Queen doth shame her not.

[*Exit* CLYTEMNESTRA; *the* LEADER *continues in a cautious tone.*

Let thine ear mark her message. 'Tis of fair
Seeming, and craves a clear interpreter. . . .
But, Herald, I would ask thee; tell me true
Of Menelâüs. Shall he come with you,
Our land's belovèd crown, untouched of ill?

HERALD.

I know not how to speak false words of weal
For friends to reap thereof a harvest true.

LEADER.

Canst speak of truth with comfort joined? Those two
Once parted, 'tis a gulf not lightly crossed.

HERALD.

Your king is vanished from the Achaian host,
He and his ship! Such comfort have I brought.

LEADER.

Sailed he alone from Troy? Or was he caught
By storms in the midst of you, and swept away?

HERALD.

Thou hast hit the truth; good marksman, as men say!
So a long suffering makes but a brief tale.

LEADER.

How ran the sailors' talk? Did there prevail
One rumour, showing him alive or dead?

HERALD.

None knoweth, none hath tiding, save the head
Of Helios, ward and watcher of the world.

LEADER.

Then tell us of the storm. How, when God hurled
His anger, did it rise? How did it die?

HERALD.

It likes me not, a day of presage high
With dolorous tongue to stain. Those twain, I vow,
Stand best apart. When one with shuddering brow,
From armies lost, back beareth to his home
Word that the terror of her prayers is come;
One wound in her great heart, and many a fate
For many a home of men cast out to sate
The twofold scourge that worketh Ares' lust,
Spear crossed with spear, dust wed with bloody dust;
Who walketh laden with such weight of wrong,
Why, let him, if he will, uplift the song
That is Hell's triumph. But to come as I
Am now come, laden with deliverance high,
Home to a land of peace and laughing eyes,
And mar all with that fury of the skies
Which made our Greeks curse God—how should this be?
Two enemies most ancient, Fire and Sea,
A sudden friendship swore, and proved their plight
By war on us poor sailors through that night
Of misery, when the horror of the wave
Towered over us, and winds from Strymon drave
Hull against hull, till good ships, by the horn
Of the mad whirlwind gored and overborne,
One here, one there, 'mid rain and blinding spray,
Like sheep by a devil herded, passed away.
And when the blessèd Sun upraised his head,
We saw the Aegean waste a-foam with dead,

Dead men, dead ships, and spars disasterful.
Howbeit for us, our one unwounded hull
Out of that wrath was stolen or begged free
By some good spirit—sure no man was he!—
Who guided clear our helm; and on till now
Hath Saviour Fortune throned her on the prow.
No surge to mar our mooring, and no floor
Of rock to tear us when we made for shore.
Till, fled from that sea-hell, with the clear sun
Above us and all trust in fortune gone,
We drove like sheep the thoughts about our brain
Of that lost army, broken and scourged amain
With evil. And, methinks, if there is breath
In them, they talk of us as gone to death—
How else?—and we of them! But, howso fare
The rest, for him the Gods must surely care;
And if by word of Zeus who wills not yet
To leave the old house for ever desolate,
Some ray of sunlight on a far-off sea
Lights him, yet green and living . . . we shall see
His ship some day in the harbour!—'Twas the word
Of truth ye asked me for, and truth ye have heard!

[*Exit* HERALD. *The* CHORUS *take position for the Third Stasimon.*

CHORUS.

(*Surely there was mystic meaning in the name* HELENA, *meaning which was fulfilled when she fled to Troy.*)

Who was He who found for thee
That name, truthful utterly—
Was it One beyond our vision
Moving sure in pre-decision?

Of man's doom his mystic lips?—
Calling thee, the Battle-wed,
Thee, the Strife-encompassèd,
HELEN? Yea, in fate's derision,
Hell in cities, Hell in ships,
Hell in hearts of men they knew her,
When the dim and delicate fold
Of her curtains backward rolled,
And to sea, to sea, she threw her
In the West Wind's giant hold:
And with spear and sword behind her
Came her hunters in a flood,
Down the oarblade's viewless trail
Tracking, till in Simoïs' vale
Through the leaves they crept to find her,
Her, the Wrath, the seed of blood.

(*The Trojans welcomed her with triumph and praised Alexander, till at last their song changed and they saw another meaning in Alexander's name also.*)

So to Troy God's watchful breath
Bore a Love one-named with Death;
Bore a doom of sin, a token
Of the guest-bread falsely broken
And the hearth of God betrayed;
But the happy voices swelled,
Glorying in the prize they held
And the lover's bliss outspoken
And the song his brethren made,
'Mid the bridal torches burning;
Till King Priam's ancient city,
With the years, turning, turning,
Took a new song for her learning

A song changed and full of pity,
Like the cry of a lost nation
O'er the secret of its shame,
As another whispered Word
In the bridegroom's name they heard,
A name wed with lamentation,
With dead men and blood and flame.

(*Like a lion's whelp reared as a pet and turning afterwards to a great beast of prey,*)

Lo, once there was a herdsman, reared
In his own house, so stories tell,
A lion's whelp, a milk-fed thing
And soft in life's first opening
Among the sucklings of the herd;
The happy children loved him well,
And old men smiled, and oft, they say,
In men's arms, like a babe, he lay,
Bright-eyed, and toward the hand that teased him
Eagerly fawning for food or play.

Then on a day outflashed the sudden
Rage of the lion brood of yore;
He paid his debt to them that fed
With wrack of herds and carnage red,
Yea, wrought him a great feast unbidden,
Till all the house-ways ran with gore;
A sight the thralls fled weeping from,
A great red slayer, beard a-foam,
High-priest of some blood-cursèd altar
God had uplifted against that home.

(*Such was Helen in Troy.*)

And how shall I call the thing that came
At the first hour to Ilion city?
Call it a dream of peace untold,
A secret joy in a mist of gold,
A woman's eye that was soft, like flame,
A flower which ate a man's heart with pity.

But she swerved aside and wrought to her kiss a bitter ending,
And a wrath was on her harbouring, a wrath upon her friending,
When to Priam and his sons she fled quickly o'er the deep,
With the god to whom she sinned for her watcher on the wind,
A death-bride, whom brides long shall weep.

(*Men say that Good Fortune wakes the envy of God; not so; Good Fortune may be innocent, and then there is no vengeance.*)

A grey word liveth, from the morn
Of old time among mortals spoken,
That man's Wealth waxen full shall fall
Not childless, but get sons withal;
And ever of great bliss is born
A tear unstanched and a heart broken

But I hold my thought alone and by others unbeguiled;
'Tis the deed that is unholy shall have issue, child on child,
Sin on sin, like his begetters; and they shall be as they were.

But the man who walketh straight, and the house
thereof, tho' Fate
Exalt him, the children shall be fair.

(*It is Sin, it is Pride and Ruthlessness, that beget children like themselves till Justice is fulfilled upon them.*)

But Old Sin loves, when comes the hour again,
To bring forth New,
Which laugheth lusty amid the tears of men;
Yea, and Unruth, his comrade, wherewith none
May plead nor strive, which dareth on and on,
Knowing not fear nor any holy thing;
Two fires of darkness in a house, born true,
Like to their ancient spring.

But Justice shineth in a house low-wrought
With smoke-stained wall,
And honoureth him who filleth his own lot;
But the unclean hand upon the golden stair
With eyes averse she flieth, seeking where
Things innocent are; and, heeding not the power
Of wealth by man misgloried, guideth all
To her own destined hour.

[*Here amid a great procession enter* AGAMEMNON *on a Chariot. Behind him on another Chariot is* CASSANDRA. *The* CHORUS *approach and make obeisance. Some of* AGAMEMNON'S *men have on their shields a White Horse, some a Lion. Their arms are rich and partly barbaric.*

LEADER.

All hail, O King! Hail, Atreus' Son!
Sacker of Cities! Ilion's bane!

With what high word shall I greet thee again?
How give thee worship, nor heap the boon
Of praise too lofty, nor stint too soon?
For many will cling to fair seeming
The faster because they have sinned erewhile;
And a man may sigh with never a sting
Of grief in his heart, and a man may smile
With eyes unlit and a lip that strains.
But the wise Shepherd knoweth his sheep,
And his eyes pierce deep
The faith like water that fawns and feigns.

But I hide nothing, O King. That day
When in quest of Helen our battle array
Hurled forth, thy name upon my heart's scroll
Was deep in letters of discord writ;
And the ship of thy soul,
Ill-helmed and blindly steered was it,
Pursuing ever, through men that die,
One wild heart that was fain to fly.
But on this new day,
From the deep of my thought and in love I say
"Sweet is a grief well ended";
And in time's flow thou wilt learn and know
The true from the false,
Of them that were left to guard the walls
Of thine empty House unfriended.

[*During the above* CLYTEMNESTRA *has appeared on the Palace steps, with a train of Attendants, to receive her Husband.*

AGAMEMNON.

To Argos and the gods of Argolis
All hail, who share with me the glory of this
Home-coming and the vengeance I did wreak
On Priam's City! Yea, though none should speak,
The great gods heard our cause, and in one mood
Rising as judges, in the urn of blood,
That men should fall and die and towers should
burn,
Cast their great vote; while over Mercy's urn
Hope waved her empty hands and nothing fell.
'Tis fire and smoke that now Troy's tale must tell;
The wrack-wind liveth, and where Ilion died
The reek of the old fatness of her pride
From hot and writhing ashes rolls afar.
For which let thanks, wide as our glories are,
Be uplifted; seeing the Beast of Argos hath
Round Ilion's towers piled high his fence of wrath
And, for one woman ravished, wrecked by force
A City. Lo, the leap of the wild Horse
In darkness when the Pleiades were dead;
A mailèd multitude, a Lion unfed,
Which leapt the tower and lapped the blood of Kings!

First to the Gods I make these thanksgivings.
But for thy words: I marked them, and I mind
Their meaning, and my voice shall be behind
Thine. For not many men, the proverb saith,
Can love a friend whom fortune prospereth
Unenvying; and about the envious brain
Cold poison clings, and doubles all the pain
Life brings him. His own woundings he must nurse,
And feels another's gladness like a curse.

Well can I speak. I know the mirrored glass
Called friendship, and the shadow shapes that pass
And feign them a King's friends. I have known but one—
Odysseus, him we trapped against his own
Will!—who once harnessed bore his yoke right well . . .
Be he alive or dead of whom I tell
The tale. And for the rest, touching our state
And gods, we will assemble in debate
A concourse of all Argos, taking sure
Counsel, that what is well now may endure
Well, and if aught needs healing medicine, still
By cutting and by fire, with all good will,
I will essay to avert the after-wrack
Such sickness breeds.

Aye, Heaven hath led me back;
And on this hearth where still my fire doth burn
I will go pay to heaven my due return,
Which guides me here, which saved me far away.
O Victory, now mine own, be mine alway!

[CLYTEMNESTRA, *at the head of her retinue, steps forward. She controls her suspense with difficulty but gradually gains courage as she proceeds.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ye Elders, Council of the Argive name
Here present, I will no more hold it shame
To lay my passion bare before men's eyes.
There comes a time to a woman when fear dies
For ever. None hath taught me. None could tell,
Save me, the weight of years intolerable

I lived while this man lay at Ilion.
That any woman thus should sit alone
In a half-empty house, with no man near,
Makes her half-blind with dread! And in her ear
Alway some voice of wrath; now messengers
Of evil; now not so; then others worse,
Crying calamity against mine and me.
Oh, had he half the wounds that variously
Came rumoured home, his flesh must be a net,
All holes from heel to crown! And if he met
As many deaths as I met tales thereon,
Is he some monstrous thing, some Gêryon
Three-souled, that will not die, till o'er his head
Three robes of earth be piled, to hold him dead?
Aye, many a time my heart broke, and the noose
Of death had got me; but they cut me loose.
It was those voices alway in mine ear.

For that, too, young Orestes is not here
Beside me, as were meet, seeing he above
All else doth hold the surety of our love;
Let not thy heart be troubled. It fell thus:
Our loving spear-friend took him, Strophius
The Phocian, who forewarned me of annoy
Two-fronted, thine own peril under Troy,
And ours here, if the rebel multitude
Should cast the Council down. It is men's mood
Alway, to spurn the fallen. So spake he,
And sure no guile was in him.
But for me,
The old stormy rivers of my grief are dead
Now at the spring, with not a tear unshed.
Mine eyes are sick with vigil, endlessly

Weeping the beacon-piles that watched for thee
For ever answerless. And did I dream,
A gnat's thin whirr would start me, like a scream
Of battle, and show me thee by terrors swept,
Crowding, too many for the time I slept.

From all which stress delivered and free-souled,
I greet my lord: O watchdog of the fold,
O forestay sure that fails not in the squall,
O strong-based pillar of a towering hall;
O single son to a father age-ridden;
O land unhoped-for seen by shipwrecked men;
Sunshine more beautiful when storms are fled;
Spring of quick water in a desert dead. . . .
How sweet to be set free from any chain!

These be my words to greet him home again.
No god shall grudge them. Surely I and thou
Have suffered in time past enough! And now
Dismount, O head with love and glory crowned,
From this high car; yet plant not on bare ground
Thy foot, great King, the foot that trampled Troy.
Ho, bondmaids, up! Forget not your employ,
A floor of crimson broideries to spread
For the King's path. Let all the ground be red
Where those feet pass; and Justice, dark of yore,
True guide him to a home he has looked not for!
What followeth next, our sleepless care shall see
Ordered as God's good pleasure may decree.

[*The attendants spread a tapestry of crimson and gold from the Chariot to the Door of the Palace.* AGAMEMNON *does not move.*

AGAMEMNON.

Daughter of Leda, watcher of my fold,
In sooth thy welcome, grave and amply told,
Fitteth mine absent years. Though it had been
Seemlier, methinks, some other, not my Queen,
Had spoke these honours. For the rest, I say,
Seek not to make me soft in woman's way;
Cry not thy praise to me wide-mouthed, nor fling
Thy body down, as to some barbarous king.
Nor yet with broidered hangings strew my path,
To awake the unseen ire. 'Tis God that hath
Such worship; and for mortal man to press
Rude feet upon this broidered loveliness . . .
I vow there is danger in it. Let my road
Be honoured, surely; but as man, not god.
Rugs for the feet and yonder broidered pall . . .
The names ring diverse! . . . Aye, and not to fall
Suddenly blind is of all gifts the best
God giveth, for I reckon no man blest
Ere to the utmost goal his race be run.
So be it; and if, as this day I have done,
I shall do always, then I fear no ill.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Tell me but this, nowise against thy will . . .

AGAMEMNON.

My will, be sure, shall falter not nor fade.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Was this a vow in some great peril made?

AGAMEMNON.

Enough! I have spoke my purpose, fixed and plain

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Had Priam conquered. . . . Think, would he refrain?

AGAMEMNON.

Oh, stores of broideries would be trampled then!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Lord, care not for the cavillings of men!

AGAMEMNON.

The murmur of a people hath strange weight.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Who feareth envy, feareth to be great.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis graceless when a woman strives to lead.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

When a great conqueror yields, 'tis grace indeed.

AGAMEMNON.

So in this war thou must my conqueror be?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yield! With good will to yield is victory!

AGAMEMNON.

Well, if I needs must . . . Be it as thou hast said!
Quick! Loose me these bound slaves on which I tread,

And while I walk yon wonders of the sea
God grant no eye of wrath be cast on me
From far!

[*The Attendants untie his shoes.*

For even now it likes me not
To waste mine house, thus marring underfoot
The pride thereof, and wondrous broideries
Bought in far seas with silver. But of these
Enough.—And mark, I charge thee, this princess
Of Ilion; tend her with all gentleness.
God's eye doth see, and loveth from afar,
The merciful conqueror. For no slave of war
Is slave by his own will. She is the prize
And chosen flower of Ilion's treasuries,
Set by the soldiers' gift to follow me.
Now therefore, seeing I am constrained by thee
And do thy will, I walk in conqueror's guise
Beneath my Gate, trampling sea-crimson dyes.

[*As he dismounts and sets foot on the Tapestries* CLYTEMNESTRA'S *women utter again their Cry of Triumph. The people bow or kneel as he passes.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

There is the sea—its caverns who shall drain?—
Breeding of many a purple shell the stain
Surpassing silver, ever fresh renewed,
For robes of kings. And we, by right indued,
Possess our fill thereof. Thy house, O King,
Knoweth no stint, nor lack of anything.
What trampling of rich raiment, had the cry
So sounded in the domes of prophecy,

Would I have vowed these years, as price to pay
For this dear life in peril far away!
Where the root is, the leafage cometh soon
To clothe an house, and spread its shadowy boon
Against the burning star; and, thou being come,
Thou, on the midmost hearthstone of thy home,
Oh, warmth in winter leapeth to thy sign.
And when God's summer melteth into wine
The green grape, on that house shall coolness fall
Where the true man, the master, walks his hall.

Zeus, Zeus! True Master, let my prayers be true!
And, oh, forget not that thou art willed to do!

[*She follows* AGAMEMNON *into the Palace. The retinues of both King and Queen go in after them.* CASSANDRA *remains.*

CHORUS.

What is this that evermore, [*Strophe* 1.
A cold terror at the door
Of this bosom presage-haunted,
Pale as death hovereth,
While a song unhired, unwanted,
By some inward prophet chanted,
Speaks the secret at its core?
And to cast it from my blood
Like a dream not understood
No sweet-spoken Courage now
Sitteth at my heart's dear prow.

Yet I know that manifold
Days, like sand, have waxen old

Since the day those shoreward-thrown
Cables flapped, and, line on line,
Standing forth for Ilion,
The long galleys took the brine.

[*Antistrophe* 1.

And in harbour—mine own eye
Hath beheld—again they lie;
Yet that lyreless music hidden
Whispers still words of ill;
'Tis the Soul of me unbidden,
Like some Fury sorrow-ridden,
Weeping over things that die.
Neither waketh in my sense
Ever Hope's dear confidence;
For this flesh that groans within,
And these bones that know of Sin,
This tossed heart upon the spate
Of a whirlpool that is Fate,
Surely these lie not. Yet deep
Beneath hope my prayer doth run,
All will die like dreams, and creep
To the unthought-of and undone.

[*Strophe* 2.

—Surely of great Weal at the end of all
Comes not Content; so near doth Fever crawl,
Close neighbour, pressing hard the narrow wall.

— Woe to him who fears not fate!
'Tis the ship that forward straight
Sweepeth, strikes the reef below;
He who fears and lightens weight,

Casting forth, in measured throw,
From the wealth his hand hath got . . .
His whole ship shall founder not,
With abundance overfraught,
Nor deep seas above him flow.
—Lo, when famine stalketh near,
One good gift of Zeus again
From the furrows of one year
Endeth quick the starving pain;

[*Antistrophe* 2.

—But once the blood of death is fallen, black
And oozing at a slain man's feet, alack!
By spell or singing who shall charm it back?

— One there was of old who showed
Man the path from death to day;
But Zeus, lifting up his rod,
Spared not, when he charged him stay.

— Surely every doom of God
Hath by other dooms its way
Crossed, lest one alone bear sway;
Else my dumb heart, without word
Breaking, had its tale outpoured,
Which now murmuring hides away,
Full of pain and daring not
Its own tangle to unknot,
Though it burns, it burns alway.

[*Suddenly* CLYTEMNESTRA *appear, standing in the Doorway.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou likewise, come within! I speak thy name,
Cassandra;

[CASSANDRA *trembles, but continues to stare in front of her, as though not hearing* CLYTEMNESTRA.

seeing the Gods—why chafe at them?—
Have placed thee here, to share within these walls
Our lustral waters, 'mid a crowd of thralls
Who stand obedient round the altar-stone
Of our Possession. Therefore come thou down,
And be not over-proud. The tale is told
How once Alcmêna's son himself, being sold,
Was patient, though he liked not the slaves' mess.
And more, if Fate must bring thee to this stress,
Praise God thou art come to a House of high report
And wealth from long ago. The baser sort,
Who have reaped some sudden harvest unforeseen,
Are ever cruel to their slaves, and mean
In the measure. We shall give whate'er is due.

[CASSANDRA *is silent.*

LEADER.

To thee she speaks, and waits . . . clear words and true!
Oh, doom is all around thee like a net;
Yield, if thou canst. . . . Belike thou canst not yet.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Methinks, unless this wandering maid is one
Voiced like a swallow-bird, with tongue unknown
And barbarous, she can read my plain intent.
I use but words, and ask for her consent.

LEADER.

Ah, come! 'Tis best, as the world lies to-day.
Leave this high-thronèd chariot, and obey!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How long must I stand dallying at the Gate?
Even now the beasts to Hestia consecrate
Wait by the midmost fire, since there is wrought
This high fulfilment for which no man thought.
Wherefore, if 'tis thy pleasure to obey
Aught of my will, prithee, no more delay!
If, dead to sense, thou wilt not understand . . .
Thou show her, not with speech but with brute hand!

[*To the Leader of the* CHORUS.

LEADER.

The strange maid needs a rare interpreter.
She is trembling like a wild beast in a snare.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Fore God, she is mad, and heareth but her own
Folly! A slave, her city new o'erthrown,
She needs must chafe her bridle, till this fret
Be foamed away in blood and bitter sweat.
I waste no more speech, thus to be defied.

[*She goes back inside the Palace.*

LEADER.

I pity thee so sore, no wrath nor pride
Is in me.—Come, dismount! Bend to the stroke
Fate lays on thee, and learn to feel thy yoke.

[*He lays his hand softly on* CASSANDRA'S *shoulder.*

CASSANDRA (*moaning to herself*).

Otototoi . . . Dreams. Dreams.
Apollo. O Apollo!

SECOND ELDER.

Why sob'st thou for Apollo? It is writ,
He loves not grief nor lendeth ear to it.

CASSANDRA.

Otototoi . . . Dreams. Dreams.
Apollo. O Apollo!

LEADER.

Still to that god she makes her sobbing cry
Who hath no place where men are sad, or die.

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, Apollo! Light of the Ways of Men!
Mine enemy!
Hast lighted me to darkness yet again?

SECOND ELDER.

How? Will she prophesy about her own
Sorrows? That power abides when all is gone!

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, Apollo! Light of all that is!
Mine enemy!
Where hast thou led me! . . Ha! What house
is this?

LEADER.

The Atreidae's castle. If thou knowest not, I
Am here to help thee, and help faithfully.

CASSANDRA (*whispering*).

Nay, nay. This is the house that God hateth.
There be many things that know its secret; sore
And evil things; murders and strangling death.
'Tis here they slaughter men . . . A splashing floor!

SECOND ELDER.

Keen-sensed the strange maid seemeth, like a hound
For blood.—And what she seeks can sure be found!

CASSANDRA.

The witnesses . . . I follow where they lead.
The crying . . . of little children . . . near the gate:
Crying for wounds that bleed:
And the smell of the baked meats their father ate.

SECOND ELDER

(*recognizing her vision, and repelled*).

Word of thy mystic power had reached our ear
Long since. Howbeit we need no prophets here.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, ah! What would they? A new dreadful thing.
A great great sin plots in the house this day;
Too strong for the faithful, beyond medicining . . .
And help stands far away.

LEADER.

This warning I can read not, though I knew
That other tale. It rings the city through.

CASSANDRA.

O Woman, thou! The lord who lay with thee!
Wilt lave with water, and then . . . How speak
the end?
It comes so quick. A hand . . . another hand . . .
That reach, reach gropingly . . .

LEADER.

I see not yet. These riddles, pierced with blind
Gleams of foreboding, but bemuse my mind.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, ah! What is it? There; it is coming clear.
A net . . . some net of Death:
A woman: she in his arms: is she the snare,
Who blood-guilt with another compasseth?
O Crowd of ravening Voices, be glad, yea, shout
And cry for the stoning, cry for the casting out!

SECOND ELDER.

What Fury Voices call'st thou to be hot
Against this castle? Such words like me not.
And deep within my breast I felt that sick
And saffron drop, which creepeth to the heart
To die as the last rays of life depart.
Misfortune comes so quick.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, look! Look! Keep his mate from the Wild
Bull!
A tangle of raiment, see;
A black horn, and a blow, and he falleth, full
In the marble amid the water. List to me!
I speak plain. . . . Blood in the bath and treachery!

LEADER.

No great interpreter of oracles
Am I; but this, I think, some mischief spells.

What spring of good hath seercraft ever made
Up from the dark to flow?
'Tis but a weaving of words, a craft of woe,
To make mankind afraid.

CASSANDRA (*still in the vision*).

Poor woman! Poor dead woman! . . . Yea, it is I,
Poured out like water among them. Weep for me . . . (*Recovering.*)
Ah! What is this place? Why must I come with thee .
To die, only to die?

LEADER.

Thou art borne on the breath of God, thou spirit wild,
For thine own weird to wail,
Like to that wingèd voice, that heart so sore
Which, crying alway, hungereth to cry more,
"Itylus, Itylus," till it sing her child
Back to the nightingale.

CASSANDRA.

Oh, happy Singing Bird, so sweet, so clear!
Soft wings for her God made,
And an easy passing, without pain or tear . . .
For me 'twill be torn flesh and rending blade.

SECOND ELDER.

Whence is it sprung, whence wafted on God's breath,
This anguish reasonless?
This throbbing of terror shaped to melody,
Moaning of evil blent with music high?
Who hath marked out for thee that mystic path
Through thy woe's wilderness?

CASSANDRA.

Alas for the kiss, the kiss of Paris, his people's bane!
Alas for Scamander Water, the water my fathers drank!
Long, long ago, I played about thy bank,
And was cherished and grew strong;
Now by a River of Wailing, by shores of Pain,
Soon shall I make my song.

LEADER.

How say'st thou? All too clear,
This ill word thou hast laid upon thy mouth!
A babe could read thee plain.
It stabs within me like a serpent's tooth,
The bitter thrilling music of her pain:
I marvel as I hear.

CASSANDRA.

Alas for the toil, the toil of a City, worn unto death!
Alas for my father's worship before the citadel,
The flocks that bled and the tumult of their breath!
But no help from them came
To save Troy Towers from falling as they fell! . .
And I on the earth shall writhe, my heart aflame.

SECOND ELDER.

Dark upon dark, new ominous words of ill!
Sure there hath swept on thee some Evil Thing
Crushing, which makes thee bleed
And in the torment of thy vision sing
These plaining death-fraught oracles . . . Yet still, still,
Their end I cannot read!

CASSANDRA.

[*By an effort she regains mastery of herself, and speaks directly to the Leader.*

'Fore God, mine oracle shall no more hide
With veils his visage, like a new-wed bride!
A shining wind out of this dark shall blow,
Piercing the dawn, growing as great waves grow,
To burst in the heart of sunrise . . . stronger far
Than this poor pain of mine. I will not mar
With mists my wisdom.
Be near me as I go,
Tracking the evil things of long ago,
And bear me witness. For this roof, there clings
Music about it, like a choir which sings
One-voiced, but not well-sounding, for not good
The words are. Drunken, drunken, and with blood,
To make them dare the more, a revelling rout
Is in the rooms, which no man shall cast out,
Of sister Furies. And they weave to song,
Haunting the House, its first blind deed of wrong,
Spurning in turn that King's bed desecrate,
Which turned a brother's sin to eternal hate. . . .

Hath it missed or struck, mine arrow! Am I a poor
Dreamer, that begs and babbles at the door?
Give first thine oath in witness, that I know
Of this great dome the sins wrought long ago.

ELDER.

And how should oath of mine, though bravely sworn,
Appease thee? Yet I marvel that one born
Far over seas, of alien speech, should fall
So apt, as though she had lived here and seen all.

CASSANDRA.

The Seer Apollo made me too to see.

ELDER (*in a low voice*).

Was the God's heart pierced with desire for thee?

CASSANDRA.

Time was, I held it shame hereof to tell.

ELDER.

All are more nice of speech when life runs well.

CASSANDRA.

We wrestled, and his breath to me was sweet.

ELDER.

Ye came to the getting of children, as is meet?

CASSANDRA.

I swore to Loxias, and I swore a lie.

ELDER.

Already thine the gift of prophecy?

CASSANDRA.

Already I showed my people all their path.

ELDER.

And Loxias did not smite thee in his wrath?

CASSANDRA.

After that sin . . . no man believed me more.

ELDER.

Nay, then, to us thy wisdom seemeth sure.

CASSANDRA.

Oh, oh! Agony, agony!
Again the awful pains of prophecy
Are on me, maddening as they fall. . . .
Ye see them there . . . beating against the wall?
So young . . . like shapes that gather in a dream . . .
Slain by a hand they loved. Children they seem,
Murdered . . . and in their hands baked meat they bear:
I think it is themselves. Yea, flesh is there,
And inward parts. . . . Oh, what a horrible load
To carry! And their father drank their blood.
From these, I warn ye, vengeance broodeth still,
A lion's rage, which goes not forth to kill
But lurketh in his lair, watching the high
Hall of my war-gone master . . . Master? Aye;
Mine, mine! The yoke is nailed about my neck . . .
Oh, lord of ships and trampler on the wreck
Of Ilion, knows he not this she-wolf's tongue,
Which licks and fawns, and laughs with ear up-sprung,

To bite in the end like secret death?—And can
The woman? . . . Slay a strong and armèd man?
What fangèd reptile like to her doth creep?
Some serpent amphisbene, some Skylla, deep
Housed in the rock, where sailors sink and die,
Priestess of death blood-raging, which doth cry
On her own flesh war truceless, merciless.
God! And she shrieked her triumph in his face,
As shouts a conqueror when the foemen break;
And feigned it gladness for his safety's sake!
What if no man believe me? 'Tis all one.
The thing which must be shall be; aye, and soon
Thou too shalt sorrow for these things, and here
Standing confess me all too true a seer.

LEADER.

The Thyestean feast of children slain
I understood, and tremble. Aye, my brain
Reels at these visions, beyond guesswork true.
But after, though I heard, I had lost the clue.

CASSANDRA.

Man, thou shalt look on Agamemnon dead.

LEADER.

Peace, Mouth of Evil! Be those words unsaid!

CASSANDRA.

No god of peace hath watch upon that hour.

LEADER.

If it must come. Forfend it, Heavenly Power!

CASSANDRA.

They do not think of prayer; they think of death.

LEADER.

They? Say, what man this foul deed compasseth?

CASSANDRA.

Alas, thou art indeed fallen far astray!

LEADER.

How could such deed be done? I see no way

CASSANDRA

Yet know I not the Greek tongue all too well?

LEADER.

Greek are the Delphic dooms, but hard to spell.

CASSANDRA.

Ah! Ah! There!
What a strange fire! It moves . . . It comes at me.
O Wolf Apollo, mercy! O agony! . . .
Why lies she with a wolf, this lioness lone,
Two-handed, when the royal lion is gone?
God, she will kill me! Like to them that brew
Poison, I see her mingle for me too
A separate vial in her wrath, and swear,
Whetting her blade for him, that I must share
His death . . . because, because he hath dragged me here!
Oh, why these mockers at my throat? This gear
Of wreathèd bands, this staff of prophecy?
You? I will kill you first, before I die.
Begone!

[*She tears off her prophetic habiliments; and presently throws them on the ground, and stamps on them.*

Down to perdition! . . . Lie ye so?
So I requite you! Now make rich in woe
Some other Bird of Evil, me no more!

[*Coming to herself.*

Ah, see! It is Apollo's self, hath tore
His crown from me! Who watched me long ago
In this same prophet's robe, by friend, by foe—
All with one voice, all blinded—mocked to scorn
"A thing of dreams," "a beggar-maid outworn,"
Poor, starving and reviled, I endured all;
And now the Seer, who won me with his call
Of seercraft, leads me down this deadly way . .
Not to the altar-stone where men did slay
My father; 'tis a block, a block with gore
Still hot, that waits me, of one slain before.
Yet not of God unheeded shall we lie.
There cometh after, one who lifteth high
The downfallen; a branch where blossometh
A sire's avenging and a mother's death.
Exiled and wandering, from this land outcast,
One day He shall return, and set the last
Crown on these sins that have his house downtrod.
For, lo, there is a great oath sworn of God,
His father's upturned face shall guide him home.
Why should I grieve? Why pity these men's doom?
Saw I not long ago mine own Troy-town
Pass as she passed? And they who cast her down
Have thus their end, as God gives judgement sure. . . .
I go to drink my cup. I will endure
To die. O Gates, Death-Gates, all hail to you!
Only, pray God the blow be stricken true!
Pray God, unagonized, with blood that flows
Quick unto friendly death, these eyes may close!

LEADER.

O full of sorrows, full of wisdom great,
Woman, thy speech is a long anguish; yet,
Knowing thy doom, why walkst thou with clear eyes,
Like some god-blinded beast, to sacrifice?

CASSANDRA.

There is no escape, friends; only vain delay.

LEADER.

Is not the later still the sweeter day?

CASSANDRA.

The day is come. Small profit now to fly.

LEADER.

Through all thy griefs, Woman, thy heart is high.

CASSANDRA.

Alas! None that is happy hears that praise.

LEADER.

Are not the brave dead blest in after days?

CASSANDRA.

O Father! O my brethren brave, I come!

[*She moves towards the House, but recoils shuddering.*

LEADER.

What frights thee? What is that thou startest from?

CASSANDRA.

Ah, faugh! Faugh!

LEADER.

What turns thee in that blind
Horror? Unless some loathing of the mind . . .

CASSANDRA.

Death drifting from the doors, and blood like rain!

LEADER.

'Tis but the dumb beasts at the altar slain.

CASSANDRA.

And vapours from a charnel-house . . . See there!

LEADER.

'Tis Tyrian incense clouding in the air.

CASSANDRA (*recovering herself again*).

So be it!—I will go, in yonder room
To weep mine own and Agamemnon's doom.
May death be all! Strangers, I am no bird
That pipeth trembling at a thicket stirred
By the empty wind. Bear witness on that day
When woman for this woman's life shall pay,
And man for man ill-mated low shall lie:
I ask this boon, as being about to die.

LEADER.

Alas, I pity thee thy mystic fate!

CASSANDRA.

One word, one dirge-song would I utter yet
O'er mine own corpse. To this last shining Sun
I pray that, when the Avenger's work is done,
His enemies may remember this thing too,
This little thing, the woman slave they slew!

O world of men, farewell! A painted show
Is all thy glory; and when life is low
The touch of a wet sponge out-blotteth all.
Oh, sadder this than any proud man's fall!

[*She goes into the House.*

CHORUS.

Great Fortune is an hungry thing,
And filleth no heart anywhere,
Though men with fingers menacing
Point at the great house, none will dare,
When Fortune knocks, to bar the door
Proclaiming: "Come thou here no more!"
Lo, to this man the Gods have given
Great Ilion in the dust to tread
And home return, upheld of heaven;
If it is writ, he too shall go
Through blood for blood spilt long ago;
If he too, dying for the dead,
Should crown the deaths of alien years,
What mortal afar off, who hears,
Shall boast him Fortune's Child, and led
Above the eternal tide of tears?

[*A sudden Cry from within.*

VOICE.

Ho! Treason in the house! I am wounded: slain.

LEADER.

Hush! In the castle! 'Twas a cry
Of some man wounded mortally.

VOICE.

Ah God, another! I am stricken again.

LEADER.

I think the deed is done. It was the King
Who groaned. . . . Stand close, and think if anything . . .

[*The Old Men gather together under the shock, and debate confusedly.*

ELDER B.

I give you straight my judgement. Summon all
The citizens to rescue. Sound a call!

ELDER C.

No, no! Burst in at once without a word!
In, and convict them by their dripping sword!

ELDER D.

Yes; that or something like it. Quick, I say,
Be doing! 'Tis a time for no delay.

ELDER E.

We have time to think. This opening . . . They have planned
Some scheme to make enslavement of the land.

ELDER F.

Yes, while we linger here! They take no thought
Of lingering, and their sword-arm sleepeth not!

ELDER G

I have no counsel. I can speak not. Oh,
Let him give counsel who can strike a blow!

ELDER H.

I say as this man says. I have no trust
In words to raise a dead man from the dust.

ELDER I.

How mean you? Drag out our poor lives, and stand
Cowering to these defilers of the land?

ELDER J.

Nay, 'tis too much! Better to strive and die!
Death is an easier doom than slavery.

ELDER K.

We heard a sound of groaning, nothing plain,
How know we—are we seers?—that one is slain?

ELDER L.

Oh, let us find the truth out, ere we grow
Thus passionate! To surmise is not to know.

LEADER.

Break in, then! 'Tis the counsel ye all bring,
And learn for sure, how is it with the King.

[*They cluster up towards the Palace Door, as though to force an entrance, when the great Door swings open, revealing* CLYTEMNESTRA, *who stands, axe in hand, over the dead bodies of* AGAMEMNON *and* CASSANDRA. *The body of* AGAMEMNON *is wrapped in a rich crimson web. There is blood on* CLYTEMNESTRA'S *brow, and she speaks in wild triumph.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh, lies enough and more have I this day
Spoken, which now I shame not to unsay.
How should a woman work, to the utter end,
Hate on a damnèd hater, feigned a friend;
How pile perdition round him, hunter-wise,
Too high for overleaping, save by lies?
To me this hour was dreamed of long ago;
A thing of ancient hate. 'Twas very slow
In coming, but it came. And here I stand
Even where I struck, with all the deed I planned
Done! 'Twas so wrought—what boots it to deny?—
The man could neither guard himself nor fly.
An endless web, as by some fisher strung,
A deadly plenteousness of robe, I flung
All round him, and struck twice; and with two cries
His limbs turned water and broke; and as he lies
I cast my third stroke in, a prayer well-sped
To Zeus of Hell, who guardeth safe his dead!
So there he gasped his life out as he lay;
And, gasping, the blood splashed me. . . . Like dark spray
It splashed into my face, a dew of death,
Sweet as the rain-drops blown by God's dear breath
O'er a parched field, the day the buds are born! . . .
Which things being so, ye Councillors high-born,
Depart in joy, if joy ye will. For me,
I glory. Oh, if such a thing might be
As o'er the dead thank-offering to outpour,
On this dead it were just, aye, just and more,
Who filled the cup of the House with treacheries
Curse-fraught, and here hath drunk it to the lees!

LEADER.

We are astonied at thy speech. To fling,
Wild mouth! such vaunt over thy murdered King!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wouldst fright me, like a witless woman? Lo,
This bosom shakes not. And, though well ye know,
I tell you . . . Curse me as ye will, or bless,
'Tis all one . . This is Agamemnon; this,
My husband, dead by my right hand, a blow
Struck by a righteous craftsman. Aye, 'tis so.

CHORUS.

Woman, what evil tree,
What poison grown of the ground
Or draught of the drifting sea
Way to thy lips hath found,
Making thee clothe thy heart
In rage, yea, in curses burning
When thine own people pray?
Thou hast hewn, thou hast cast away;
And a thing cast away thou art,
A thing of hate and a spurning!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, now, for me thou hast thy words of fate;
Exile from Argos and the people's hate
For ever! Against him no word was cried,
When, recking not, as 'twere a beast that died,
With flocks abounding o'er his wide domain,
He slew his child, my love, my flower of pain, . . .

Great God, as magic for the winds of Thrace!
Why was not he man-hunted from his place,
To purge the blood that stained him? . . . When
the deed
Is mine, oh, then thou art a judge indeed!
But threat thy fill. I am ready, and I stand
Content; if thy hand beateth down my hand,
Thou rulest. If aught else be God's decree,
Thy lesson shall be learned, though late it be.

CHORUS.

Thy thought, it is very proud;
Thy breath is the scorner's breath;
Is not the madness loud
In thy heart, being drunk with death?
Yea, and above thine eye
A star of the wet blood burneth!
Oh, doom shall have yet her day,
The last friend cast away,
When lie doth answer lie
And a stab for a stab returneth!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And hark what oath-gods gather to my side!
By my dead child's Revenge, now satisfied,
By Atê, by the Erînys that in Hell
Waiteth, to whom in sacrifice he fell,
My Hope shall walk not in the house of Fear,
While on my hearth one fire yet burneth clear,
One true friend, one Aigisthos, as of old!
What should I fear, when fallen here I hold
This foe, this scorner of his wife, this toy
And fool of each Chryseïs under Troy;

And there withal his soothsayer and slave,
His chanting bed-fellow, his leman brave,
Who rubbed the galleys' benches at his side.
But, oh, they had their guerdon as they died!
For he lies thus, and she, the wild swan's way,
Hath trod her last long weeping roundelay,
And lies, his lover, ravisht o'er the main
For his bed's comfort and my deep disdain.

CHORUS.

(*Some Elders.*)

Would God that suddenly
With no great agony,
No long sick-watch to keep,
My hour would come to me,
My hour, and presently
Bring the eternal, the
Unwaking Sleep,
Now that my Shepherd, he
Whose love watched over me,
Lies in the deep!

ANOTHER.

For woman's sake he endured and battled well,
And by a woman's hand he fell.

OTHERS.

What hast thou done, O Helen blind of brain,
O face that slew the souls on Ilion's plain,
One face, one face, and many a thousand slain?

The hate of old that on this castle lay,
Builded in lust, a husband's evil day,
Hath bloomed for thee a perfect flower again
And unforgotten, an old and burning stain
Never to pass away.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, pray not for the hour of death, being tried
Too sore beneath these blows
Neither on Helen turn thy wrath aside,
The Slayer of Men, the face which hath destroyed
Its thousand Danaan souls, and wrought a wide
Wound that no leech can close.

CHORUS.

—Daemon, whose heel is set
On the House and the twofold kin
Of the high Tantalidae,
A power, heavy as fate,
Thou wieldest through woman's sin,
Piercing the heart of me!

—Like a raven swoln with hate
He hath set on the dead his claw,
He croaketh a song to sate
His fury, and calls it Law!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, call upon Him! Yea, call—
And thy thought hath found its path—
The Daemon who haunts this hall,
The thrice-engorgèd Wrath;

From him is the ache of the flesh
For blood born and increased;
Ere the old sore hath ceased
It oozeth afresh.

CHORUS.

— Indeed He is very great,
And heavy his anger, He,
The Daemon who guides the fate
Of the old Tantalidae:
Alas, alas, an evil tale ye tell
Of desolate angers and insatiable!

—Ah me,
And yet 'tis all as Zeus hath willed,
Doer of all and Cause of all;
By His Word every chance doth fall,
No end without Him is fulfilled;
What of these things
But cometh by high Heaven's counsellings?

[*A band of Mourners has gathered within the House.*

MOURNERS.

Ah, sorrow, sorrow! My King, my King!
How shall I weep, what word shall I say?
Caught in the web of this spider thing,
In foul death gasping thy life away!
Woe's me, woe's me, for this slavish lying,
The doom of craft and the lonely dying,
The iron two-edged and the hands that slay!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And vaunt ye still this deed hath been
My work? Nay, look, but have no thought
Ye look on Agamemnon's Queen.
Beneath an image he hath wrought
In likeness of this dead man's wife,
The Alastor old, the Driver of Man astray,
Pursuer of Atreus for the feast defiled,
To assoil an ancient debt hath claimed this life;
A warrior and a crownèd King this day
Atones for a slain child.

CHORUS.

—That thou art innocent herein,
What tongue dare boast? It cannot be.
Yet from the deeps of ancient sin
The Alastor may have wrought with thee.

—On the red Slayer crasheth, groping wild
For blood, more blood, to seal his peace again,
And wash like water the old frozen stain
Of the torn child.

MOURNERS.

Ah, sorrow, sorrow! My King, my King!
How shall I weep, what word shall I say?
Caught in the web of this spider thing,
In foul death gasping thy life away.
Woe's me, woe's me, for this slavish lying,
The doom of craft and the lonely dying,
The iron two-edged, and the hands that slay!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And what of the doom of craft that first
He planted, making the House accurst?
What of the blossom from this root riven,
Iphigenîa, the unforgiven?
Even as the wrong was, so is the pain:
He shall not laugh in the House of the slain,
When the count is scored;
He hath but spoilèd and paid again
The due of the sword.

CHORUS.

I am lost; my mind dull-eyed
Knows not nor feels
Whither to fly nor hide
While the House reels.
The noise of rain that falls
On the roof affrighteth me,
Washing away the walls;
Rain that falls bloodily.

Doth ever the sound abate?
Lo, the next Hour of Fate
Whetting her vengeance due
On new whet-stones, for new
Workings of hate.

MOURNERS.

Would thou hadst covered me, Earth, O Earth,
Or e'er I had looked on my lord thus low,
In the pallèd marble of silvern girth!
What hands may shroud him, what tears may flow?

Not thine, O Woman, who dared to slay him,
Thou durst not weep to him now, nor pray him,
Nor pay to his soul the deep unworth
Of gift or prayer to forget thy blow.

—Oh, who with heart sincere
Shall bring praise or grief
To lay on the sepulchre
Of the great chief?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

His burial is not thine to array.
By me he fell, by me he died,
I watch him to the grave, not cried
By mourners of his housefolk; nay,

Iphigenîa waits for this;
A daughter, as is meet, shall run
Where wail the waves of Acheron
To fold him in her arms and kiss!

CHORUS.

Lo, she who was erst reviled
Revileth; and what is true?
Spoil taken from them that spoiled,
Life-blood from them that slew!
Surely while God ensueth
His laws, while Time doth run,
'Tis written: On him that doeth
It shall be done.

This is God's law and grace,
Who then shall hunt the race
Of curses from out this hall?
The House is sealed withal
To dreadfulness.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, thou hast found the Law, and stept
In Truth's way.—Yet even now I call
The Living Wrath which haunts this hall
To truce and compact. I accept

All the affliction he doth heap
Upon me, and I charge him go
Far off with his self-murdering woe
To strange men's houses. I will keep

Some little dower, and leave behind
All else, contented utterly.
I have swept the madness from the sky
Wherein these brethren slew their kind.

[*As she ceases, exhausted and with the fire gone out of her,* AIGISTHOS, *with Attendants, bursts triumphantly in.*

AIGISTHOS.

O shining day, O dawn of righteousness
Fulfilled! Now, now indeed will I confess
That divine watchers o'er man's death and birth
Look down on all the anguish of the earth,
Now that I see him lying, as I love
To see him, in this net the Furies wove,
To atone the old craft of his father's hand.
For Atreus, this man's father, in this land

Reigning, and by Thyestes in his throne
Challenged—he was his brother and mine own
Father—from home and city cast him out;
And he, after long exile, turned about
And threw him suppliant on the hearth, and won
Promise of so much mercy, that his own
Life-blood should reek not in his father's hall.
Then did that godless brother, Atreus, call,
To greet my sire—More eagerness, O God,
Was there than love!—a feast of brotherhood.
And, feigning joyous banquet, laid as meat
Before him his dead children. The white feet
And finger-fringèd hands apart he set,
Veiled from all seeing, and made separate
The tables. And he straightway, knowing naught,
Took of those bodies, eating that which wrought
No health for all his race. And when he knew
The unnatural deed, back from the board he
threw,
Spewing that murderous gorge, and spurning brake
The table, to make strong the curse he spake:
"Thus perish all of Pleisthenês begot!"
For that lies this man here; and all the plot
Is mine, most righteously. For me, the third,
When butchering my two brethren, Atreus spared
And cast me with my broken sire that day,
A little thing in swaddling clothes, away
To exile; where I grew, and now at last
Justice hath brought me home! Yea, though outcast
In a far land, mine arm hath reached this king;
My brain, my hate, wrought all the counselling;
And all is well. I have seen mine enemy
Dead in the snare, and care not if I die!

LEADER.

Aigisthos, to insult over the dead
I like not. All the counsel, thou hast said,
Was thine alone; and thine the will that spilled
This piteous blood. As justice is fulfilled,
Thou shalt not 'scape—so my heart presageth—
The day of cursing and the hurlèd death.

AIGISTHOS.

How, thou poor oarsman of the nether row,
When the main deck is master? Say'st thou so? . . .
To such old heads the lesson may prove hard,
I fear me, when Obedience is the word.
But hunger, and bonds, and cold, help men to find
Their wits.—They are wondrous healers of the mind!
Hast eyes and seest not this?—Against a spike
Kick not, for fear it pain thee if thou strike.

LEADER

(*turning from him to* CLYTEMNESTRA).

Woman! A soldier fresh from war! To keep
Watch o'er his house and shame him in his sleep . . .
To plot this craft against a lord of spears . . .

[CLYTEMNESTRA, *as though in a dream, pays no heed.* AIGISTHOS *interrupts.*

AIGISTHOS.

These be the words, old man, that lead to tears!
Thou hast an opposite to Orpheus' tongue,
Who chained all things with his enchanting song,
For thy mad noise will put the chains on thee.
Enough! Once mastered thou shalt tamer be.

LEADER.

Thou master? Is old Argos so accurst?
Thou plotter afar off, who never durst
Raise thine own hand to affront and strike him
down . . .

AIGISTHOS.

To entice him was the wife's work. I was known
By all men here, his old confessed blood-foe.
Howbeit, with his possessions I will know
How to be King. And who denieth me
Shall be yoked hard, no easy trace-horse he,
Corn-flushed. Hunger, and hunger's prison mate,
The clammy murk, shall see his rage abate.

LEADER.

Thou craven soul! Why not in open strife
Slay him? Why lay the blood-sin on his wife,
Staining the Gods of Argos, making ill
The soil thereof? . . . But young Orestes still
Liveth. Oh, Fate will guide him home again,
Avenging, conquering, home to kill these twain!

AIGISTHOS.

'Fore God, if 'tis your pleasure thus to speak and do,
ye soon shall hear!
Ho there, my trusty pikes, advance! There cometh
business for the spear.

[*A body of Spearmen, from concealment outside, rush in and dominate the stage.*

LEADER.

Ho there, ye Men of Argos! Up! Stand and be ready, sword from sheath!

AIGISTHOS.

By Heaven, I also, sword in hand, am ready, and refuse not death!

LEADER.

Come, find it! We accept thy word. Thou offerest what we hunger for.

[*Some of the Elders draw swords with the Leader; others have collapsed with weakness. Men from* AGAMEMNON'S *retinue have gathered and prepare for battle, when, before they can come to blows,* CLYTEMNESTRA *breaks from her exhausted silence.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, peace, O best-belovèd! Peace! And let us work no evil more.
Surely the reaping of the past is a full harvest, and not good,
And wounds enough are everywhere.—Let us not stain ourselves with blood.
Ye reverend Elders, go your ways, to his own dwelling every one,
Ere things be wrought for which men suffer.—What we did must needs be done.
And if of all these strifes we now may have no more, oh, I will kneel

And praise God, bruisèd though we be beneath the Daemon's heavy heel.
This is the word a woman speaks, to hear if any man will deign.

AIGISTHOS.

And who are these to burst in flower of folly thus of tongue and brain,
And utter words of empty sound and perilous, tempting Fortune's frown,
And leave wise counsel all forgot, and gird at him who wears the crown?

LEADER.

To cringe before a caitiff's crown, it squareth not with Argive ways.

AIGISTHOS

(*sheathing his sword and turning from them*).

Bah, I will be a hand of wrath to fall on thee in after days.

LEADER.

Not so, if God in after days shall guide Orestes home again!

AIGISTHOS.

I know how men in exile feed on dreams . . . and know such food is vain.

LEADER.

Go forward and wax fat! Defile the right for this thy little hour!

AIGISTHOS.

I spare thee now. Know well for all this folly thou
shalt feel my power.

LEADER.

Aye, vaunt thy greatness, as a bird beside his mate
doth vaunt and swell.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

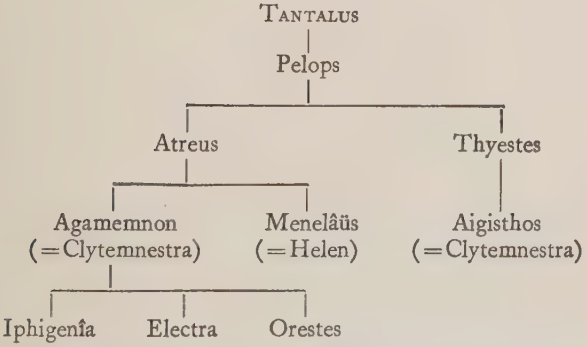
Vain hounds are baying round thee; oh, forget them!
Thou and I shall dwell
As Kings in this great House. We two at last will
order all things well.

[*The Elders and the remains of* AGAMEMNON'S *retinue retire sullenly, leaving the Spearmen in possession.* CLYTEMNESTRA *and* AIGISTHOS *turn and enter the Palace.*

NOTES TO THE AGAMEMNON

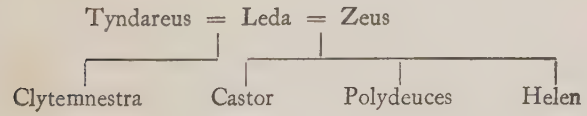
THE chief characters in the play belong to one family, as is shown by the two genealogies:—

I.



(Also, a sister of Agamemnon, name variously given, married Strophios, and was the mother of Pylades.)

II.



P. 35, l. 1.]—The Watchman, like most characters in Greek tragedy, comes from the Homeric

tradition, though in Homer (*Od.*, iv. 524) he is merely a servant of Aigisthos.

P. 36, l. 28, Women's triumph cry.]—This cry of the women recurs several times in the play: cf. p. 60, ll. 587 ff., p. 89, l. 1234. It is conventionally represented by "ololû" ; as the cry to Apollo Paian is "I-ê," l. 146, and Cassandra's sob is "ototoi" or "ototototoi," p. 81.

Pp. 37 f., ll. 40 ff.]—With this silent scene of Clytemnestra's, compare the long silence of Cassandra below, and the silence of Prometheus in that play until his torturers have left him. See the criticism of Aeschylus in Aristophanes, *Frogs*, ll. 911–920, pp. 68, 69 in my translation.

P. 39, l. 104, Sign of the War-Way.]—i.e. an ominous sign seen by the army as it started on its journey. In Homer, *Iliad*, ii. 305–329, it is a snake which eats the nine young of a mother bird and then the mother, and is turned into stone afterwards. —All through this chorus the language of the prophet Calchas is intentionally obscure and riddling—the style of prophecy.

P. 41, l. 146, But I-ê, i-ê.]—Pronounce *Ee-ay.*) Calchas, catching sight in his vision of the further consequences which Artemis will exact if she fulfils the sign, calls on Apollo Paian, the Healer, to check her.

P. 41, l. 160, Zeus, whate'er He be.]—This conception of Zeus is expressed also in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, and was probably developed in the Prometheus Trilogy. See my *Rise of the Greek Epic*, p. 278 (Ed. 4).

It is connected with the common Greek conception of the *Tritos Sôtêr*—the Saviour Third.

First, He who sins; next, He who avenges; third, He who saves. In vegetation worship it is the Old Year who has committed Hubris, the sin of pride, in summer; the Winter who slays him; the New Year which shall save. In mythology the three successive Rulers of Heaven are given by Hesiod as Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus (cf. *Prometheus*, 965 ff.), but we cannot tell if Aeschylus accepted the Hesiodic story. Cf. note on l. 246, and Clytemnestra's blasphemy at l. 1387, p. 97.

P. 43, l. 192, Winds from Strymon.]—From the great river gorge of Thrace, NNE; cf. below, l. 1418.

P. 43, l. 201, Artemis.]—Her name was terrible, because of its suggestion. She demanded the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenîa. (See Euripides' two plays, *Iphigenîa in Tauris* and *Iphigenîa in Aulis*.) In other poets Agamemnon has generally committed some definite sin against Artemis, but in Aeschylus the death of Iphigenîa seems to be merely one of the results of his acceptance of the Sign.

P. 44, l. 215, 'Tis a Rite of old.]—Literally "it is Themis." Human sacrifice had had a place in the primitive religion of Greece; hence Agamemnon could not reject the demand of the soldiers as an obvious crime. See *Rise of Greek Epic*[4], pp. 131 ff.

P. 45, l. 246, The Third Cup.]—Regularly poured to Zeus Sôtêr, the Saviour, and accompanied by a paean or cry of joy.

P. 45, l. 256, This Heart of Argos, this frail Tower.]—i.e. themselves.

P. 45, l. 264, Glad-voiced.]—Clytemnestra is in extreme suspense, as the return of Agamemnon will mean either her destruction or her deliverance. At

such a moment there must be no ill-omened word, so she challenges fate.

P. 46, l. 276, A word within that hovereth without wings.]—i.e. a presentiment. "Winged words" are words spoken, which fly from speaker to hearer. A 'wingless' word is unspoken. The phrase occurs in Homer.

Pp. 47 ff., ll. 281 ff.]—Beacon Speech. There is no need to inquire curiously into the practical possibility of this chain of beacons. Greek tragedies do not care to be exact about this kind of detail. There may well have been a tradition that Agamemnon, like the Great King of Persia, used a chain of beacons across the Aegean.—Note how vividly Clytemnestra's imagination is working in her excitement. She seems to see before her every leaping light in the chain, just as in the next speech she imagines the scene in Troy almost with the intensity of a vision.

P. 48, l. 314, Victory in the first as in the last.]—All are Victory beacons; the spirit of Victory infects them all equally. Cf. l. 854 below, where Agamemnon prays that the Victory which is now with him, or in him, may abide.

P. 49, l. 348, A woman's word.]—Her hatred and fear of Agamemnon, making her feel vividly the horrors of the sack and the peril overhanging the conquerors, have carried her dangerously far. She checks herself and apologizes for her womanlike anxiety. Cf. l. 1661, p. 111.

P. 52, ll. 409 ff., Seers they saw visions.]—A difficult and uncertain passage. I think the seers attached to the royal household (cf. *Choëphoroe*, l. 37,

where they are summoned to read a dream) were rather like what we call clairvoyants. Being consulted, they look into some pool of liquid or the like; there they see gradually emerging the palace, the injured King, the deserted room, and at last a wraith of Helen herself, haunting the place.

P. 55, l. 487.]—This break in the action, covering a space of several days, was pointed out by Blomfield in 1826 and then forgotten. It removes the gravest of the difficulties raised by Dr. Verrall in his famous essay upon the plot of the *Agamemnon*.

P. 55, l. 495, Dry dust, own brother to the mire of war.]—i.e. "I can see by the state of his clothes, caked with dry dust which was once the mire of battle, that he comes straight from the war and can speak with knowledge." The Herald is probably (though perhaps not quite consistently) conceived as having rushed post-haste with his news.

Pp. 56 ff., HERALD.]—The Herald bursts in overcome with excitement and delight, full of love for his home and everything he sees. A marked contrast to Agamemnon, ll. 810 ff. Note that his first speech confirms all the worst fears suggested by Clytemnestra. Agamemnon has committed all the sins she prayed against, and more. The terrible lines 527 ff., "Till her Gods' Houses, etc.," are very like a passage in the *Persae*, 811 ff., where exactly the same acts by the Persian invaders of Greece make their future punishment inevitable.

P. 56, l. 509, Pythian Lord.]—Apollo is often a sinister figure in tragedy. Cf. Sophocles' *Oedipus*, ll. 915 ff., pp. 52 f., and the similar scene, *Electra*, 655 ff. Here it is a shock to the Herald to come

suddenly on the god who was the chief enemy of the Greeks at Troy. One feels Apollo an evil presence also in the Cassandra scene, ll. 1071 ff., pp. 81 ff.

P. 57, l. 530, Happy among men.]—The crown of his triumph! Early Greek thought was always asking the question, What is human happiness? To the Herald Agamemnon has achieved happiness if any one ever did. Cf. the well-known story of Croesus asking Solon who was the happiest man in the world (*Herodotus*, I. 30–33).

P. 58, ll. 551 ff., Herald's second speech.]—The connexion of thought is: "After all, why should either of us wish to die? All has ended well." This vivid description of the actualities of war can be better appreciated now than it could in 1913.

P. 59, l. 577, These spoils.]—Spoils purporting to come from the Trojan War were extant in Greek temples in Aeschylus' day and later.

P. 60, l. 595, Our women's joy-cry.]—There seems to have been in Argos an old popular festival, celebrating with joy or mockery the supposed death of a man and a woman. Homer (Od. iii. 309 f.) derives it from a rejoicing by Orestes over Aigisthos and Clytemnestra; cf. below, ll. 1316 ff., p. 93; Aeschylus here and Sophocles in the *Electra*, from a celebration by Clytemnestra of the deaths of Agamemnon and Cassandra. It seems to have had a woman's "Ololugmos" in it, perhaps uttered by men. See Kaibel's note, Soph. *Electra*, 277–281.

P. 60, l. 612, Bronze be dyed like wool.]—Impossible in the literal sense, but there is after all a way of dying a sword red!

P. 60, ll. 613–617.]—The arrangement proposed in the text seems to make sense of these much disputed lines.

P. 61, l. 617, Menelâüs.]—This digression about Menelâüs is due, as similar digressions generally are when they occur in Greek plays, to the poet feeling bound to follow the tradition. Homer begins his longest account of the slaying of Agamemnon by asking "Where was Menelâüs?" (*Od.*, iii. 249). Agamemnon could be safely attacked because he was alone. Menelâüs was away, wrecked or wind-bound.

P. 62, l. 642, Twofold scourge.]—Ares works his will when spear crosses spear, when man meets man. Hence "twofold."

P. 63, Chorus. The name Helena.]—There was a controversy in Aeschylus' day whether language, including names, was a matter of Convention or of Nature. Was it mere accident, and could you change the name of anything at will? Or was language a thing rooted in nature and fixed by God from of old? Aeschylus adopts the latter view: Why was this being called Helena? If one had understood God's purpose one would have seen it was because she really *was* "Helenâs"—*Ship-destroyer*. (The Herald's story of the shipwreck has suggested this particular idea.) Similarly, if a hero was called Aias, and came to great sorrow, one could see that he was so called from "Aiai," "Alas!"—The antistrophe seems to find a meaning in the name Paris or Alexandros, where the etymology is not so clear. (See Verrall's note.)

Pp. 67 f.]—Entrance of Agamemnon. The metre of the Chorus indicates marching; so that apparently the procession takes some time to move across the orchestra and get into position. Cassandra would

be dressed, as a prophetess, in a robe of white reaching to the feet, covered by an *agrênon*, or net of wool with large meshes; she would have a staff and certain fillets or crowns. The Leader welcomes the King: he explains that, though he was against the war ten years ago, and has not changed his opinion, he is a faithful servant of the King . . . and that not all are equally so. He gave a similar hint to the Herald above, ll. 546–550, p. 58.

P. 69, Agamemnon.]—A hard, cold speech, full of pride in the earlier part, and turning to ominous threats at the end. Those who have dared to be false shall be broken.—At the end comes a note of fear, like the fear in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. He is so full of triumph and success; he must be very careful not to provoke a fall.—Victory, Nîkê, was to the Greeks a very vivid and infectious thing. It clung to you or it deserted you. And one who was really charged with Victory, like Agamemnon, was very valuable to his friends and people. Hence they made statues of Victory wingless—so that she should not fly away. See *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 191 note.

P. 70. Clytemnestra.]—A wonderful speech. It seems to me that Aeschylus' imagination realized all the confused passions in Clytemnestra's mind, but that his art was not yet sufficiently developed to make them all clear and explicit. She is in suspense; does Agamemnon know her guilt or not? At least, if she is to die, she wants to say something to justify or excuse herself in the eyes of the world. A touch of hysteria creeps in; why could he not have been killed in all these years? Why must he rise, like

some monster from the grave, unkillable? Gradually she recovers her calm, explains clearly the suspicious point of Orestes' absence, and heaps up her words and gestures of welcome to an almost oriental fullness (which Agamemnon rebukes, ll. 918 ff., p. 73). Again, at the end, when she finds that for the time she is safe, her real feelings almost break out.

P. 72.]—What is the motive of the Crimson Tapestries? I think the tangling robe must have been in the tradition, as the murder in the bath certainly was. One motive, of course, is obvious: Clytemnestra is tempting Agamemnon to sin or "go too far." He tries to resist, but the splendour of an oriental homecoming seduces him and he yields. But is that enough to account for such a curious trait in the story, and one so strongly emphasized? We are told afterwards that Clytemnestra threw over her victim an "endless web," long and rich (p. 97), to prevent his seeing or using his arms. And I cannot help suspecting that this endless web was the same as the crimson pall.

If one tries to conjecture the origin of this curious story, it is perhaps a clue to realize that the word *droitê* means both a bath and a sarcophagus, or rather that the thing called droitê, a narrow stone or marble vessel about seven feet long, was in pre-classical and post-classical times used as a sarcophagus, but in classical times chiefly or solely as a bath. If among the prehistoric graves at Mycenae some later peasants discovered a royal mummy or skeleton in a sarcophagus, wrapped in a robe of royal crimson, and showing signs of violent death—such as Schliemann believed that he discovered—would they not say:

"We found the body of a King murdered in a bath, and wrapped round and round in a great robe"?

Pp. 73 f.]—Agamemnon is going through the process of temptation. He protests rather too often and yields.

P. 73, l. 931, Tell me but this.]—This little dialogue is very characteristic of Aeschylus. Euripides would have done it at three times the length and made all the points clear. In Aeschylus the subtlety is there, but it is not easy to follow.

P. 74, l. 945, These bound slaves.]—i.e. his shoes. The metaphor shows the trend of his unconscious mind.

P. 75, l. 950, This princess.]—This is the first time that the attention of the audience is drawn to Cassandra. She too is one of Aeschylus' silent figures. I imagine her pale, staring in front of her, almost as if in a trance, until terror seizes her at Clytemnestra's greeting in l. 1035, p. 79.

P. 75, l. 964, The cry.]—i.e. the cry of the possessed prophetess which rang from the inner sanctuary at Delphi and was interpreted by the priests.—The last two lines of the speech are plain in their meaning but hard to translate. Literally: "when the full, or fulfilled, man walketh his home.—O Zeus the Fulfiller, fulfil my prayers."

P. 76, l. 976.]—The victim has been drawn into the house; the Chorus sing a low boding song: every audience at a Greek tragedy would expect next to hear a death-cry from within, or to see a horrified messenger rush out. Instead of which the door opens and there is Clytemnestra: what does she want? "Come thou also!" One victim is not enough.—In the

next scene we must understand the cause of Clytemnestra's impatience. If she stays too long outside, some one will warn Agamemnon; if she leaves Cassandra, she with her second-sight will warn the Chorus. If Cassandra could only be got inside all would be safe!

P. 78, l. 1022, "One there was of old."]—Asklêpios, the physician, restored Hippolytus to life, and Zeus blasted him for so oversetting the laws of nature.

P. 79, l. 1040, Alcmêna's son.]—Heracles was made a slave to Omphalê, Queen of Lydia. His grumbles at his insufficient food were a theme of comedy.

P. 79, l. 1049, Belike thou canst not yet.]—Cf. below, ll. 1066 ff. The Elder speaks in sympathy. "Very likely you cannot yet bring yourself to submit."

P. 80, l. 1061, Thou show her.]—It seems odd to think that this passage has for centuries been translated as if it was all addressed to Cassandra: "But if you do not understand what I say, please indicate the same with your barbarous hand!"—What makes Cassandra at last speak? I think that the Elder probably touches her, and the touch as it were breaks the spell.

P. 81, l. 1072, Cassandra.]—"Ototoi" really takes the place of a stage direction: she utters a long low sob.—The exclamation which I have translated "Dreams!" seems to occur when people see ghosts or visions. *Alcestis*, 261; *Prometheus*, 567. Cf. *Phoenissae*, 1296.—"Mine enemy!" The name "Apollon" suggested "*apollyon*," Destroying . . . the form which is actually used in the Book of Revelation (Rev. ix. 11)

Observe how, during the lyric scene, Cassandra's vision grows steadily more definite: First vague horror of the House: then the sobbing of children, slain long ago: then a new deed of blood coming; a woman in it: a wife: then, with a great effort, an attempt to describe the actual slaying in the bath. Lastly, the sight of herself among the slain. (This last point is greatly developed by Euripides, *Trojan Women*, ll. 445 ff., pp. 33 f.)

The story of the Children of Thyestes is given below, ll. 1590 ff., p. 107. Procnê (or Philomêla) was an Attic princess who, in fury against her Thracian husband, Têreus, killed their child Itys, or Itylus, and was changed into a nightingale, to weep for him for ever.

P. 86, ll. 1178 ff.]—Dialogue. During the lyrics Cassandra has been "possessed" or "entranced": the turn to dialogue marks a conscious attempt to control herself and state plainly her message of warning. In order to prove her power, she first tells the Elders of deeds done in the past which are known to them but cannot have been known to her. When once they are convinced of her true seercraft, she will be able to warn them of what is coming!—The short 'stichomŷthia' (line for line dialogue). dealing in awed whispers with things which can hardly be spoken, leaves the story of Cassandra still a mystery. Then her self-control breaks and the power of the God sweeps irresistibly upon her; cf. below, ll. 1256 ff., where it comes at her like a visible shape of fire, a thing not uncommon with modern clairvoyants.

P. 90, l. 1252. Thou art indeed fallen

far astray!]—Because they had said "what *man*."

P. 90, l. 1265, These wreathed bands, this staff of prophecy.]—Cf. *Trojan Women*, ll. 451 ff., p. 34.

P. 94, ll. 1343 ff., The death-cry; the hesitation of the Elders.]—This scene is often condemned or even ridiculed; I think, through misunderstanding. We knew the Old Men were helpless, like "dreams wandering in the day." It is essential to the story that when the crisis comes they shall be found wanting. But they are neither foolish nor cowardly; each utterance in itself is natural and characteristic, but counsels are divided. One would like to know whether Aeschylus made them speak together confusedly, as would certainly be done on the modern stage, or whether the stately conventions of Greek tragedy preferred that each speaker should finish his say. In any case, what happens is that after a moment or two of confused counsel the Elders determine to break into the Palace, but as they are mounting the steps the great doors are flung open and Clytemnestra confronts them, standing over the dead bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra.

The illusion intended is that the Elders have entered the Palace and discovered Clytemnestra. But, as the mechanical arrangements of the Greek stage were not equal to this sudden change of scene, and since also it would, even with perfect machinery, have a tiresome interrupting effect, a slight confusion or inconsistency is allowed. We are supposed to be inside the house; but as a matter of fact the supposition is soon forgotten, and the play goes on without any attention to the particular place of the

action. On Clytemnestra's speech see Introduction, p. xiii.

P. 97, l. 1387, A prayer well sped to Zeus of Hell.]—As the third gift or libation was ritually given to Zeus the Saviour, Clytemnestra blasphemously suggests that her third and unnecessary blow was an acceptable gift to a sort of anti-Zeus, a Saviour of Death.

P. 99, l. 1436, Aigisthos.]—At last the name is mentioned which has been in the mind of every one!—Chrysêïs was a prisoner of war, daughter of Chrysês, priest of Apollo. Agamemnon was made to surrender her to her father, and from this arose his quarrel with Achilles, which is the subject of the *Iliad*.

Pp. 101–106, ll. 1468–1573, Daemon.]—The Genius or guardian spirit of the house has in this House become a Wrath, an 'Alastor' or 'Driver Astray.' See Introduction, pp. 10 ff.

P. 102, l. 1513, Mourners.]—This attribution of the different speeches or songs to different speakers is, of course, conjectural. Ancient dramas come down to us with no stage directions and very imperfect indications of the speakers.

P. 106, l. 1579, Aigisthos.]—The entry of Aigisthos enlivens the scene again after the brooding and bewildered end of the dialogue between Clytemnestra and the Elders. At the same time, it seems, no doubt by deliberate intention, to reduce it to commonplace. Aigisthos' self-defence is largely justified, but he is no hero.

P. 107, l. 1602, Pleisthenês.]—Apparently one of the ancestors of Atreus, but it is not clear where

he comes in the genealogy. He may be identical with Pelops.

P. 108, l. 1617, Oarsman of the nether row.]—On an ancient galley, bireme or trireme, the rowers of the lower bank of oars ranked as inferior to those who used the long oars from the deck.

P. 110, l. 1654.]—Clytemnestra, see Introduction, p. 13. She longs for peace, yet after all "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" The end of the play leaves us waiting for the return of Orestes. In the first scene of the *Choëphoroe* he is discovered standing by night at his father's grave.

THE CHOËPHOROE

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Orestes, *son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.*

Electra, *daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.*

Clytemnestra, *formerly wife to Agamemnon, now wedded to Aigisthos.*

Aigisthos, *son of Thyestês, blood-foe to Agamemnon, and now Tyrant of Argos.*

Pylades, *son of Strophius, King of Phôkis, friend to Orestes*

The Old Nurse *of Orestes.*

A Slave *of Aigisthos.*

Chorus *of Bondmaids in the House of Clytemnestra and Aigisthos.*

CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN THE PLAY

Agamemnon, *son of Atreus, King of Argos, Overlord of all Hellas and Chief of the Greek Armies; murdered by Clytemnestra and Aigisthos.*

Menelâüs, *brother of Agamemnon, husband of Helen.*

Zeus, *Father of Gods and Men: Latin* Jupiter.

Apollo *or* Loxias, *son of Zeus, the prophetic God of Delphi.*

Hermês, *Herald of the Gods, Guide of the Souls of the Dead, also patron of craft and darkness: Latin* Mercurius.

The Greeks are referred to as Hellenes, Achaians and Argives; Troy is also called Ilion.

The play was first produced in the archonship of Philoclês (458 B.C.). *The First Prize was won by Aeschylus with the "Agamemnon," "Choëphoroe," "Eumenides," and the Satyr-play "Prôteus."*

THE CHOËPHOROE

The scene represents the Grave of Agamemnon, a mound of earth in a desolate expanse. The time is afternoon. ORESTES *and* PYLADES *in the garb of travellers, with swords at their sides, are discovered.* ORESTES' *hair is cut short, that of* PYLADES *streams down his back. Both look grim and travel-stained.* ORESTES *holds a long tress of hair in his hand.*

ORESTES.

O Warder Hermês of the world beneath,
Son of the Father who is Lord of Death;
Saviour, be thou my saviour; Help in War,
Help me! I am returned from lands afar
To claim mine own. And on this headland steep
Of death, I call my Father o'er the deep
To hearken, to give ear.—Behold, I bring
Out of my poverty one little thing
To adorn thy grave, though who can touch the dead
Or wake from sleep that unuplifted head?
Yet long ago in Phokis, where I lay
With Strophius in the hills, being cast away
In childhood, plundered by mine enemies,
And friendless, save for this man, Pylades,

I sware an oath which should for ever set
In memory those they taught me to forget:
If once I came to manhood, so I sware,
In tresses twain I would divide mine hair,
One tress for Inachos river, by whose grace
I live, and one for mourning at this place.
Which oath I here fulfil.

[*He lays the tress of hair upon the upper part of the grave mound.*

O Herald, lay
Before his sight the gift I bring this day,
Who stood not by to mourn him as he fell,
Nor reached mine arms to bid the dead farewell.

[*As he turns, he sees the Libation-Bearers approaching.*

Ha!
What sight is this? What stricken multitude
Of women here in raiment sable-hued
Far-gleameth? How shall I interpret it?
Hath some new death upon my lineage lit?
Or is it to my father's grave they go
With offerings, to appease the wrath below?
It must be. Surely 'tis Electra there,
My sister, moves alone, none like to her
In sorrow.—O great Zeus, grant me this day
My vengeance, and be near me in the fray!
Come, Pylades, stand further, till we know
More sure, what means this embassy of woe.

[Orestes *and* Pylades *withdraw, as* Electra *with the* Chorus *of women bearing offerings for the Grave enters from the other side.*

CHORUS.

Driven, yea, driven [*Strophe* 1.
I come: I bear Peace-offering to the dead,
Mine hands as blades that tear, my tresses riven,
And cheek ploughed red.
But all my years, before this day as after,
Have been fed full with weeping as with bread.
And this dumb cry of linen, as in pain,
Deep rent about my bosom, speaketh plain
Of a life long since wounded, where no laughter
Sounds nor shall sound again.

Dread, very dread, [*Antistrophe* 1.
And hair upstarting and the wrath that streams
From the heart of sleep, have first interpreted
What manner of dreams
This house hath dreamed; a voice of terror, blasting
The midnight, up from the inmost place it grew,
Shaking the women's chambers; and the Seer,
Being sworn of God, made answer, there is here
Anger of dead men wronged, and hate outlasting
Death, against them that slew.

Craving to fly that curse [*Strophe* 2.
With graceless gift hither she urgeth me
—O Earth, Mother and Nurse!—
She whom God hateth. But my spirit fears
To speak the word it bears.
When blood is spilt, how shall a gift set free?
O hearthstone wet with tears!
O pillars of a house broken in twain!
Without sun, without love,
Murk in the heart thereof and mist above,
For a lord slain!

[*Antistrophe* 2.

The reverence of old years
Is gone, which not by battle nor by strife,
Stealing through charmèd ears,
Lifted the people's hearts to love their King;
Gone, yet the land still fears.
For fortune is a god and rules men's life.
Who knows the great Wheel's swing,
How one is smitten swift in the eyes of light;
For one affliction cries
Slow from the border of sunset; and one lies
In deedless night?

[*Strophe* 3.

Has Earth once drunk withal
The blood of her child, Man, the avenging stain
Hardens, nor flows again.
A blind pain draweth the slayer, draweth him,
On, on, till he is filled even to the brim
With sickness of the soul to atone for all.

[*Antistrophe* 3.

The shrine of maidenhood
Once broken ne'er may be unbroke again.
And where man's life hath flowed,
All the world's rivers in their multitude
Rolling shall strive in vain
To clean from a brother's hand that ancient blood.

For me, God in far days
Laid hand upon my city, and herded me
From my old home to the House of Slavery,
Where all is violence, and I needs must praise,
Just or unjust,

The pleasure of them that rule, and speechless hold
The ache of a heart that rageth in the dust.
Only behind the fold
Of this still veil for a little I hide my face
And weep for the blind doings of this race,
And secret tears are in my heart, ice-cold.

ELECTRA.

Ye thrallèd women, tirers of the bower,
Since ye are with me in this suppliant hour,
Your escort giving, give your counsel too.
What speech have I for utterance, when I sue
With offerings to the dead? What word of love,
What prayer to reach my father from above?
"To dear Lord," shall I say, "due gifts I bear
From loving mistress" . . . when they come from her?
I dare not. I can find not any word
To speak, when offerings like these are poured. . . .
Or shall I pray him, as men's custom is,
To send to them who pay these offices
Requital due . . . for murder and for pride?
Or, as in silence and in shame he died,
In shame and silence shall I pour this urn
Of offering to the dust, and pouring turn,
As men cast out some foulness they abhor,
And fling the cup, and fly, and look no more?
Share with me, Friends, this burden of strange thought.
One hate doth make us one. Oh, hide not aught
For fear of what may fall us! Destiny
Waiteth alike for them that men call free,
And them by others mastered. At thine ease
Speak, if thou knowest of wiser words than these.

LEADER.
As at God's altar, since so fain thou art,
Before this Tomb I will unveil my heart.

ELECTRA.
Speak, by his grave and in the fear thereof.

LEADER.
Pray as thou pourest: To all hearts of love . . .

ELECTRA.
And who is such of all around us, who?

LEADER.
Thyself, and whoso hates Aigisthos true.

ELECTRA.
For thee and me alone am I to pray?

LEADER.
Ask thine own understanding. It will say.

ELECTRA.
Who else? What heart that with our sorrow grieves?

LEADER.
Forget not that—far off—Orestes lives.

ELECTRA.
Oh, bravely spoke! Thou counsellest not in vain.

LEADER.
Next; on the sinners pray, their sin made plain. . . .

ELECTRA.

Pray what? I know not. Oh, make clear my road!

LEADER.

Pray that there come to them or man or god. . . .

ELECTRA.

A judge? Or an avenger? Speak thy prayer.

LEADER.

Plain be thy word: one who shall slay the slayer.

ELECTRA.

But dare I? Is it no sin thus to pray?

LEADER.

How else? With hate thine hater to repay.

[ELECTRA *mounts upon the Grave Mound and makes sacrifice.*

ELECTRA.

Herald most high of living and of dead,
Thou midnight Hermês, hear; and call the dread
Spirits who dwell below the Earth, my vows
To hearken and to watch my father's house;
And Earth our Mother, who doth all things breed
And nurse, and takes again to her their seed.
And I too with thee, as I pour these streams
To wash dead hands, will call him in his dreams:
O Father, pity me; pity thine own
Orestes, and restore us to thy throne;
We are lost, we are sold like slaves: and in our stead
Lo, she hath brought thy murderer to her bed,

Aigisthos. I am like one chained alway:
Orestes wandering without house or stay;
While they are full of pride, and make turmoil
And riot of the fruits of thy long toil.
Guide thou Orestes homeward, let there be
Some chance to aid him—Father, hark to me!
And, oh, give me a heart to understand
More than my mother, and a cleaner hand!
These prayers for us; but for our enemies
This also I speak: O Father, let there rise
Against them thine Avenger, and again
The slayer in just recompense be slain.—
Behold, I pray great evil, and I lay
These tokens down: yea, midmost as I pray
Against thine enemies I lay them—so.
Do thou to us send blessing from below
With Zeus, and Earth, and Right which conquereth all.
These be the prayers on which mine offerings fall.
Do ye set lamentation like a wreath
Round them, and cry the triumph-song of death.

[*She proceeds with the pouring of offerings and presently finds on the tomb the Lock of Hair. The* Chorus *makes lamentation before the grave.*

Chorus.

Let fall the tear that plashes as it dies,
Where the dead lies,
Fall on this barrèd door,
Where Good nor Evil entereth any more,
This holy and awful thing,
We turn from, praying—Lo, the milk and wine

Are poured. Awake and hear, thou awful King;
Hear in thy darkened soul, O Master mine!

Oh, for some man of might
To aid this land, some high and visible lord
Of battle, shining bright
Against Death; the great lance
Bearing deliverance,
The back-bent Scythian bow, the hilted sword
Close-held to smite and smite!

ELECTRA (*excitedly, returning from the Grave*).

Behold,
The offerings of the dust are ministered:
But counsel me. I bear another word.

LEADER.

Speak on. My spirit leaps for eagerness.

ELECTRA.

Cast on the tomb I found this shaven tress.

LEADER.

Who cast it there? What man or zonèd maid?

ELECTRA.

Methinks that is a riddle quickly read!

LEADER.

Thy thought is swift; and may thine elder know?

ELECTRA.

What head save mine would blazon thus its woe?

LEADER.

She that should mourn him hateth him, 'tis true.

ELECTRA (*musing, to herself*).

And surely 'tis one feather and one hue. . . .

LEADER.

With what? Oh, speak. Make thy comparison.

ELECTRA.

Look; think ye not 'tis wondrous like mine own?

LEADER.

Thy brother's! . . . Laid in secret! Can it be?

ELECTRA.

'Tis like his long locks in my memory.

LEADER.

Orestes! Would he dare to walk this land?

ELECTRA.

Belike he sent it by another's hand!

LEADER.

That calls for tears no less, if never more
His footsteps may be set on Argos' shore.

ELECTRA.

At my heart also bitterer than gall
A great wave beats. The iron hath passed thro' all

My being; and the stormy drops that rise
Fall unforbidden from my starvèd eyes,
Gazing upon this hair. 'Tis past belief
That any Argive tree hath shed this leaf.
And sure she shore it not who wrought his death,
My mother, godless, with no mother's faith
Or kindness for her child.—And yet to swear
Outright that this glad laugher is the hair
Of my beloved Orestes. . . . Oh, I am weak
With dreaming! Had it but a voice to speak
Like some kind messenger, I had not been
A phantom tossing in the wind between
Two fancies. Either quick it would proclaim
Its hate, if from some hater's head it came;
Or, if it were our own, with me 'twould shed
Tears for this tomb and our great father dead. . .
Surely they know, these gods to whom we pray,
Through what wild seas our vessel beats her way,
And, if to save us is their will, may breed
A giant oak out of a little seed. . . .

[*She goes back to the tomb, searching.*

Ah see, the print of feet, a second sign!
The same feet: surely they are shaped like mine.
Surely! Two separate trails of feet are there:
He and perchance some fellow-traveller.
The heels; the mark of the long muscle thrown
Athwart them on the sand—just like mine own
In shape and measure. What? . . . Oh, all is vain;
Torment of heart and blinding of the brain!

[*She buries her face in her hands.* ORESTES *rises from his hiding-place and stands before her.*

ORESTES.

Thy prayer hath borne its fruit. Hereafter tell
The gods thy thanks, and may the end be well!

ELECTRA.

What meanest thou? What hath God done for me?

ORESTES.

Shown thee a face which thou hast longed to see.

ELECTRA.

What face? What know'st thou of my secret heart?

ORESTES.

Orestes'. For that name all fire thou art.

ELECTRA.

If that be so, how am I near mine end?

ORESTES.

Here am I, Sister. Seek no closer friend.

ELECTRA.

Stranger! It is a plot thou lay'st for me!

ORESTES.

Against mine own dear life that plot would be.

ELECTRA.

Thou mock'st me! Thou wouldst laugh to hear me moan!

ORESTES.

Who mocks thy tribulation mocks mine own.

ELECTRA.

My heart half dares foretell that thou art he . . .

ORESTES.

Nay, when I face thee plain thou wilt not see!
Oh, seeing but that shorn tress of funeral hair
Thy soul took wings and seemed to hold me there;
Then peering in my steps . . . thou knew'st them mine,
Thy brother's, moulded feet and head like thine.
Set the lock here, where it was cut. Behold
This cloak I wear, thy woven work of old,
The battened ridges and the broidered braid
Of lions . . .

[ELECTRA *throws herself into his arms.*

Ah, bethink thee! Nor be swayed
By joy too soon. Our nearest is our foe.

ELECTRA.

O best beloved, O dreamed of long ago,
Seed of deliverance washed with tears as rain,
By thine own valour thou shalt build again
Our father's House! O lightener of mine eyes,
Four places in my heart, four sanctities,
Are thine. My father in thy face and mien
Yet living; thine the love that might have been
My mother's—whom I hate, most righteously—
And my poor sister's, fiercely doomed to die;

And thou my faithful brother, who alone
Hast cared for me. . . . O Victory, be our own
This day, with Justice who doth hold us fast,
And Zeus most high, who saveth at the last!

ORESTES.

O Zeus, O Zeus, look down on our estate!
Hast seen thine eagle's brood left desolate,
The father in the fell toils overborne
Of some foul serpent, and the young forlorn
And starved with famine, still too weak of wing
To bear to the nest their father's harvesting?
Even so am I, O Zeus, and even so
This woman, both disfathered long ago,
Both to one exile cast, both desolate.
He was thy worshipper, thy giver great
Of sacrifice. If thou tear down this nest,
What hand like his shall glorify thy feast?
Blot out the eagle's brood, and where again
Hast thou thy messenger to speak to men?
Blast this most royal oak, what shade shall cool
Thine altars on the death-day of the Bull?
But cherish us, and from a little seed
Thou shalt make great a House now fallen indeed.

LEADER.

O Children, Saviours of your father's House,
Be silent! Children, all is perilous;
And whoso hears may idly speak of ye
To our masters; whom may I yet live to see
Dead where the pine logs ooze in fragrant fire!

ORESTES. (*He speaks with increasing horror as he proceeds.*)

Oh, Loxias shall not mock my great desire,
Who spoke his divine promise, charging me
To thread this peril to the extremity:
Yea, raised his awful voice and surging told
To my hot heart of horrors stormy-cold
Till I seek out those murderers, by the road
Themselves have shown—so spake he—blood for blood:
What recketh the Wild Bull of gold or prayers?
Which failing, for the sin that now is theirs
Myself shall pay in torment manifold.
Of many things that rise from earth he told,
To appease the angry dead: yea, and strange forms,
On thee and me, of savage-fangèd worms,
Climbing the flesh; lichens, which eat away
Even unto nothingness our natural clay;
And when they leave him, a man's hair is white.
For him that disobeys, he said, the night
Hath Furies, shapen of his father's blood;
Clear-seen, with eyeball straining through the hood
Of darkness. The blind arrows of dead men
Who cried their kin for mercy and were slain,
And madness, and wild fear out of the night,
Shall spur him, rack him, till from all men's sight
Alone he goes, out to the desert dim,
And that bronze horror clanging after him!
For such as he there is no mixing bowl,
No dear libation that binds soul to soul:
From every altar fire the unseen rage
Outbars him: none shall give him harbourage,
Nor lie in the same house with such an one;

Till, without worship, without love, alone
He crawls to his death, a carcase to the core
Through-rotted, and embalmed to suffer more.

Collecting himself]

So spake he . . . God, and is one to believe
Such oracles as these? Nay, though I give
No credence, the deed now must needs be done.
So many things of power work here as one:
The God's command; grief for my father slain;
And mine own beggary urgeth me amain,
That never shall these Argives, famed afar,
High conquerors of Troy in joyous war
Cower to . . . two women. For he bears, I know,
A woman's heart. . . . If not, this day will show.

[*He kneels at the Grave:* ELECTRA *kneels opposite him and the* CHORUS *gather behind.*

CHORUS.

Ye great Apportioners of God,
The road of Righteousness make straight:
"For tongue of hate be tongue of hate
Made perfect": thus, as falls her rod,
God's justice crieth: "For the blow
Of death the blow of death atone";
"On him that doeth shall be done":
Speaks a grey word of long ago.

ORESTES. [*Strophe* 1.

O Father, Father of Doom,
What word, what deed from me,
Can waft afar to the silent room
Where thy sleep holdeth thee

A light that shall rend thy gloom?
Yet surely, the tale is told,
That tears are comfort beneath the tomb
To the great Kings of old.

LEADER. [*Strophe* 2.

No fire ravening red,
O Son, subdueth quite
The deep life of the dead;
His wrath breaks from the night.
When they weep for one who dies
His Avenger doth arise,
Yea, for father and life-giver
There is Justice, when the cries
And the tears run as a river.

ELECTRA. [*Antistrophe* 1.

O Father, hearken and save,
For my sore sorrow's sake!
Children twain are above thy grave
Seeking for thee: Oh, wake!
Thy grave is their only home,
The beggared and outcast.
What here is well? What is saved from doom?
O Atê strong to the last!

CHORUS.

Yet still it may be—God is strong—
A changèd music shall be born
To sound above this dirge forlorn,
And the King's House with Triumph-song
Lead home a Friend in love new-sworn.

ORESTES. [*Strophe* 3.

Would that in ancient days,
Father, some Lycian lance
Had slain thee by Ilion's wall;
Then hadst thou left great praise
In thy House, and thy children's glance
In the streets were marked of all:
Men had upreared for thee
A high-piled burial hill
In a land beyond the sea;
And the House could have borne its ill.

LEADER. *Antistrophe* 2.

And all they who nobly died
Would have loved him in that place,
And observed him in his pride
As he passed with royal pace
To a throne at the right hand
Of the Kings of the Dark Land:
For a king he was when living,
Above all who crownèd stand
With the sceptre of lawgiving.

ELECTRA. [*Antistrophe* 3.

Nay, would thou hadst died not ever!
Not by the Ilian Gate,
Not when the others fell
Spear-broken beside the river!
If they who wrought thee hate
Had died, it had all been well:

A strange death, full of fear,
That the folk beyond far seas
Should enquire thereof, and hear;
Not of our miseries!

CHORUS.

My daughter, rare as gold is rare,
And blither than the skies behind
The raging of the northern wind
Are these thy prayers: for what is prayer?
Yet, be thou sure, this twofold scourge
Is heard: it pierceth to the verge
Of darkness, and your helpers now
Are wakening. These encharioted
Above us, lo, their hand is red!
Abhorrèd are they by the dead;
But none so hates as he and thou!

ORESTES. [*Strophe* 4.

Ah me, that word, that word
Stabbeth my heart, as a sword!
God, God, who sendest from below
Blind vengeance in the wake
Of sin, what deed have I to do,
With hand most weak and full of woe?
'Tis for my father's sake!

LEADER. [*Strophe* 5

May it be mine, may it be mine,
To dance about the blazing pine
Crying, crying,
"A man is slain, a woman dying!"

It hideth in my bosom's core,
  It beats its wings for death, for death,
A bitter wind that blows before
  The prow, a hate that festereth,
A thing of horror, yet divine!

ELECTRA. [*Antistrophe* 4.

Zeus of the orphan, when
  Wilt lift thy hand among men?
Let the land have a sign. Be strong,
  And smite the neck from the head.
I ask for right after much wrong.
Hear me, O God! Hark to my song,
  Ye Princedoms of the Dead!

CHORUS.

'Tis written: the shed drop doth crave
  For new blood. Yea, the murdered cry
Of dead men shrieketh from the grave
  To Her who out of sins gone by
  Makes new sin, that the old may die.

ORESTES. [*Strophe* 6.

How? Are ye dumb, Ye Princedoms of the Dead?
  O Curses of Them that perish, come hither, hither!
Look on this wreck of kings, the beaten head,
Bowed in despair, roofless, disherited!
  Whither to turn, O Lord Zeus? Whither, whither?

LEADER. [*Antistrophe* 5.

My heart, my heart is tossed again
  To see thee yielded up to pain,

Failing, failing;
Then mist is on my eyes and wailing
About mine ears, and tears as rain.
But when once more I look on thee
With power exalted, sudden-swift
A hope doth all my burden lift,
And light, and signs of things to be.

ELECTRA. [*Antistrophe* 6.

What best shall pierce thine ear; the wrongs she wrought,
Wrought upon us, upon us, she and none other?
Oh, fawn and smile: but the wrongs shall soften not,
Wrongs with a wolfish heart, by a wolf begot:
They see no smile, they reck not the name of Mother!

CHORUS. [*Strophe* 7.

With the dirge of Agbatana I beat my breast:
Like the Keeners of Kissia, I make songs of pain.
Lo, yearning of arms abundant, east and west:
Tearing they smite, again and yet again,
From above, from high; yea, God hath smitten red
This bitter bleeding bosom, this bended head.

ELECTRA. [*Strophe* 8

Ho, Mother! Ho, thou, Mother,
Mine enemy, daring all!
What burial made ye here?
His people followed not,
Mourned him not, knew him not:
Enemies bare his pall:
His wife shed no tear!

ORESTES. [*Strophe* 9.

All, all dishonour, so thy story telleth it!
And for that dishonour shall the woman pay,
As the gods have willed it, as my right hand willeth it!
Then Death may take me, let me only slay!

LEADER. [*Antistrophe* 9.

His hands and feet, they were hacked away from him!
Yea, she that buried him, she wrought it so.
To make thy life blasted, without help or stay from him.
Thou hast it all, the defiling and shame and woe!

[ORESTES *breaks down in speechless tears.*

ELECTRA. [*Antistrophe* 7.

Thou tellest the doom he died, but I saw him not;
I was far off, dishonoured and nothing worth.
Like a dog they drove me back, and the door was shut,
And alone I poured my tears to him through the earth.
I laughed not, yet rejoiced that none saw me weep.—
Write this in thine heart, O Father; grave it deep.

LEADER. [*Antistrophe* 8.

Write! Yea, and draw the word
Deep unto that still land
Where thy soul dwells in peace.
What is, thou hast this day heard;
What shall be, reach forth thine hand

And take it! Be hard, be hard
To smite and not cease!

(ORESTES, ELECTRA, *and the* LEADER.)

ORESTES. [*Strophe* 10.

Thee, thee I call. Father, be near thine own.

ELECTRA.

I also cry thee, choked with the tears that flow.

LEADER.

Yea, all this band, it crieth to thee as one.

ALL.

O great King, hear us. Awake thee to the sun.
Be with us against thy foe!

ORESTES. [*Antistrophe* 10.

The slayer shall meet the slayer, wrong smite with wrong.

ELECTRA.

O Zeus, bless thou the murder to be this day!

LEADER.

(Dost hear? Oh, fear is upon me and trembling strong.)

ALL.

The day of Fate is old, it hath lingered long;
It cometh to them that pray.

DIVERS WOMEN. [*Strophe* 11.

— Alas, alas, for the travail born in the race,
— Alas for the harp of Atê, whose strings run blood,
— The beaten bosom, the grief too wild to bear,
— The pain that gnaweth, and will not sink to sleep.

[*Antistrophe* 11.

— The House hath healing for its own bitterness;
— It is here within. None other can stay the flood;
— Through bitter striving, through hate and old despair.
— Behold the Song of the Daemons of the deep!

ORESTES.

O Father mine, O most unkingly slain,
Grant me the lordship of thy House again.

ELECTRA.

A boon for me likewise, O Father, give;
To lay Aigisthos in his blood and live.

ORESTES.

So men shall honour thee with wassail high;
Else without meat or incense shalt thou lie,
Unhonoured when the dead their banquets call.

ELECTRA.

And I will pour thee offerings wondrous fair
From my stored riches for a marriage-prayer,
And this thy grave will honour more than all.

ORESTES.

Send back, O Earth, my sire to comfort me.

ELECTRA.

In power, in beauty, Great Persephone!

ORESTES.

Remember, Father, how they laved thee there!

ELECTRA.

Remember the strange weaving thou didst wear!

ORESTES.

A snarèd beast in chains no anvil wrought!

ELECTRA.

In coilèd webs of shame and evil thought!

ORESTES.

Scorn upon scorn! Oh, art thou wakenèd?

ELECTRA.

Dost rear to sunlight that belovèd head?

ORESTES.

Or send thine helping Vengeance to the light
To aid the faithful: or let even fight
Be joined in the same grapple as of yore,
If, conquered, thou wouldst quell thy conqueror.

ELECTRA.

Yet one last cry: O Father, hear and save!
Pity thy children cast upon thy grave:
The woman pity, and the weeping man.

ORESTES.

And blot not out the old race that began
With Pelops: and though slain thou art not dead!

ELECTRA.

Children are living voices for a head
Long silent, floats which hold the net and keep
The twisted line unfoundered in the deep.

ORESTES.

Listen: 'tis thou we weep for, none but thou:
Thyself art savèd if thou save us now.

LEADER.

Behold, ye have made a long and yearning praise,
This sepulchre for unlamented days
Requiting to the full. And for the rest,
Seeing now thine heart is lifted on the crest
Of courage, get thee to the deed, and see
What power the Daemon hath which guardeth thee.

ORESTES.

So be it. Yet methinks to know one thing
Were well. Why sent she this drink-offering?
Hoped she by late atonement to undo
That wrong eternal? A vain comfort, too,

Sent to one dead, and feeling not! My mind
Stumbles to understand what lies behind
These gifts, so puny for the deed she hath done.
Yea, though man offer all he hath to atone
For one life's blood, 'tis written, he hath lost
That labour.—But enough. Say all thou know'st.

LEADER.

Son, I was near her, and could mark aright.
A dream, a terror wandering in the night,
Shook her dark spirit till she spoke that word.

ORESTES.

What was the dream she dreamed? Speak, if ye heard.

LEADER.

She bore to life, she said, a Serpent Thing.

ORESTES.

And after? To its head thy story bring.

LEADER.

In swathing clothes she lapt it like a child.

ORESTES.

It craved for meat, that dragon of the wild?

LEADER.

Yes; in the dream she gave it her own breast

ORESTES.

And took no scathing from the evil beast?

LEADER.

The milk ran into blood. So deep it bit.

ORESTES.

The dream is come. The man shall follow it.

LEADER.

And she, amazed, came shrieking out of sleep;
And many a torch, long blinded in the deep
Of darkness, in our chambers burst afire
To cheer the Queen. Then spake she her desire
To send, as a swift medicine for the dread
That held her, these peace offerings to the dead.

ORESTES.

Behold, I pray this everlasting Earth,
I pray my father's grave, they bring to birth
In fullness all this dream. And here am I
To read its heart and message flawlessly.
Seeing that this serpent, born whence I was born,
Wore the same swathing-bands these limbs had worn,
Fanged the same breast that suckled me of yore,
And through the sweet milk drew that gout of gore,
And seeing she understood, and sore afeared
Shrieked: therefore it must be that, having reared
A birth most ghastly, she in wrath shall die:
And I, the beast, the serpent, even I
Shall slay her! Be it so. The dream speaks clear.

LEADER.

I take thyself for mine interpreter,
And pray that this may be. But speak thy will;
Who shall be doing, say, and who be still?

ORESTES.

'Tis simply told. This woman makes her way
Within, and ye my charges shall obey,
That they who slew by guile a man most rare,
By guile, and snarèd in the self-same snare,
May die, as Lord Apollo hath foretold,
Loxias the Seer, who never failed of old.
First, I array me in a stranger's guise,
With all the gear of travel, and likewise
This man—their guest and battle-guest of yore!
Then hither shall we come, and stand before
The courtyard gate, and call. Aye, we will teach
Our tongues an accent of Parnassian speech,
Like men in Phôkis born. And say, perchance
None of the warders with glad countenance
Will ope to us, the House being so beset
With evil: aye, what then? Then obdurate
We shall wait on, till all who pass that way
Shall make surmise against the House, and say
"What ails Aigisthos? Wherefore doth he close
His door against the traveller, if he knows
And is within?" So comes it, soon or late,
I cross the threshold of the courtyard gate,
And entering find him on my father's throne. . . .
Or, say he is abroad and comes anon,
And hears, and calls for me—and there am I
Before him, face to face and eye to eye;
"Whence comes the traveller?" ere he speaks it,
dead
I lay him, huddled round this leaping blade!
Then shall the Curse have drunken of our gore
Her third, last, burning cup, and thirst no more.

Therefore go thou within, and watch withal
That all this chance may well and aptly fall.
For you, I charge ye of your lips take heed:
Good words or silence, as the hour may need.
While One Below his counsel shall afford
And ope to me the strait way of the sword.

[ORESTES *and* PYLADES *depart*, ELECTRA *goes into the House.*

CHORUS. [*Strophe* 1.

Host on host, breedeth Earth
Things of fear and ghastly birth;
Arm on arm spreads the Sea
That full of coilèd horrors be;
And fires the sky doth multiply;
And things that crawl, and things that fly,
And they that are born in the wind can tell of the perils
Of tempest and the Wrath on high.

[*Antistrophe* 1.

But, ah, the surge overbold
Of man's passion who hath told?
Who the Love, wild as hate,
In woman's bosom desperate,
Roaming slow through fields of Woe?
Where lives of mortals linkèd go
The heart of a woman is perilous past all perils
Of stars above or deeps below.

[*Strophe* 2.

Wist ye not, O light of mind,
Her who slew her son with hate,
Thestios' daughter desolate,

How she wrought all her thought.
To one counsel, fiery-blind,
When she burned the brand of fate,
That was twin to him and brother
From the hour of that first cry
When the babe came from the mother
Till the strong man turned to die?

[*Antistrophe* 2.

Wist ye not one loathed of old,
Who to win a foe did sell,
Cruel, him who loved her well;
Skylla, dyed with blood and pride,
Who craved the rings of Cretan gold
That Minos gave, too rich to tell;
Like a wolf at night she came
Where he lay with tranquil breath,
And she cut the Crest of Flame:
And, a-sudden, all was death.

[*Strophe* 3.

But o'er all terrors on man's tongue
The woman's deed of Lemnos lies;
It echoes, like an evil song,
Far off, and whensoe'er there rise
New and strange sins, in dire surmise,
Men mind them of the Lemnian wrong.
Yet surely by the Sin God's eye
Abhorreth, mortal man shall die,
And all the glory that was his.
For who shall lift that thing on high
Which God abaseth? Not amiss

I garner to my crown of woe
These sins of Woman long ago.

[*Antistrophe* 3.

O lust so old, so hard of heart!
I lose me in the stories told,
Untimely. Have these walls no part
In ravening of desire, as bold
And evil as those deeds of old?
The House with dread thereof doth start
From dreaming. On, through woe or weal
A woman brooding planned her path,
Against a warrior robed in steel,
And armies trembled at his wrath.
And he is gone; and we must kneel
On a cold hearth and bow in fear
Before a woman's trembling spear.

[*Strophe* 4.

Yet the sword hovereth at the throat
While Justice lives. It faileth not
The Right that men to earth have trod.
Its edge is bitter to the bone;
It stabbeth on through iron, through stone,
To reach his life who hath forgot
That Ruth which is the law of God.

[*Antistrophe* 4.

For Justice is an oak that yet
Standeth; and Doom the Smith doth whet
His blade in the dark. But what is this?
A child led to the House from lands
Far off, and blood upon his hands!
The great Erinys wreaks her debt,
Whose thought is as the vast abyss.

The scene now represents the front of the Palace of the Atridae, with one door leading to the main palace, another to the Women's House. Dusk is approaching.

[*Enter* ORESTES *and* PYLADES, *disguised as merchants from Phôkis, with Attendants.*

ORESTES.

Ho, Warder! Hear! One knocketh at your gate! . . .
Ho, Warder, yet again! I knock and wait. . . .
A third time, ye within! I call ye forth;
Or counts your lord the stranger nothing worth?

A PORTER (*within, opening the main door*).

Enough! I hear. What stranger and wherefrom?

ORESTES.

Go, rouse your masters. 'Tis to them I come,
Bearing great news. And haste, for even now
Night's darkling chariot presseth to the brow
Of heaven, and wayfarers like us must find
Quick anchorage in some resthouse for our kind.
Let one come forth who bears authority;
A woman, if God will; but if it be
A man, 'twere seemlier. With a woman, speech
Trembles and words are blinded. Man can teach
Man all his purpose and make clear his thought.

[*Enter* CLYTEMNESTRA *from the House.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Strangers, your pleasure? If ye have need of aught,
All that beseems this House is yours to-day,
Warm bathing and the couch that soothes away
Toil, and the tendering of righteous eyes.
Else, if ye come on some grave enterprise,
That is man's work; and I will find the man.

ORESTES.

I come from Phôkis, of the Daulian clan,
And, travelling hither, bearing mine own load
Of merchandise, toward Argos, as the road
Branched, there was one who met me, both of us
Strangers to one another: Strophius,
A Phocian prince, men called him. On we strode
Together, till he asked me of my road
And prayed me thus: "Stranger, since other care
Takes thee to Argos, prithee find me there
The kin of one Orestes. . . . Plainly said
Is best remembered: tell them he is dead.
Forget not. And howe'er their choice may run,
To bear his ashes home, or leave their son
In a strange grave, in death an exile still,
Discover, and bring back to me their will.
Tell them his ashes lie with me, inurned
In a great jar of bronze, and richly mourned."
So much I tell you straight, being all I heard.
Howbeit, I know not if I speak my word
To the right hearers, princes of this old
Castle. Methinks his father should be told.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah me,
So cometh the last wreck in spite of all!
O Daemon, wrestler that dost fear no fall,
How dost thou spy my hidden thoughts and mar
Their peace with keen-eyed arrows from afar,
Till all who might have loved me, all, are gone!
And now Orestes; whom I had thought upon
So wisely, walking in free ways, his gait
Unsnarèd in this poison-marsh of hate;
The one last hope, the healing and the prayer
Of this old House—'twas writ on empty air!

ORESTES.

For me, in a great House and favoured thus
By fortune, 'tis by tidings prosperous
I fain were known and welcomed. Pleasantest
Of all ties is the tie of host and guest.
But my heart told me 'twere a faithless thing
To fail a comrade in accomplishing
His charge, when I had pledged both word and hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not for our sorrow shall thy portion stand
The lowlier, nor thyself be less our friend.
Another would have told us; and the end
Is all one. But 'tis time that strangers who
Have spent long hours in travel should have due
Refreshment. Ho, there! Lead him to our broad
Guest-chambers, and these comrades of his road
Who follow. See they find all comfort there

To assuage their way-worn bodies. And have care
That in their tendance naught be found amiss.
Ourselves shall with our Lord consult of this
Distress, and, having yet good friends, who know
My heart, take counsel how to affront the blow.

[CLYTEMNESTRA *goes back into the Women's House; Attendants lead* ORESTES *and his followers through the main door.*

LEADER.

Ye handmaidens, arise, be bold:
See if our moving lips have power
To aid Orestes in his hour;
For sure ye loved this House of old.

CHORUS.

Thou holy Earth, thou holy shore
Beyond the grave, where rests his head,
The Lord of Ships, the King, the Dead,
Now list, now aid, or never more!
The hour is full. The Guileful Word
Descends to wrestle for the right,
And Hermês guards the hour of night
For him that smiteth with the sword.

[*The* NURSE *enters from the Women's House, weeping.*

LEADER.

The stranger works some mischief, it would seem!
Yonder I see Orestes' Nurse, a-stream
With tears.—How now, Kilissa, whither bound,
And Grief the unbidden partner of thy round?

NURSE.

The mistress bids me call Aigisthos here
Quickly, to see these two, and learn more clear,
As man from man, the truth of what they tell.
Oh, to us slaves she makes it pitiable
And grievous, and keeps hid behind her eyes
The leaping laughter. Aye, 'tis a rich prize
For her, and for the House stark misery,
This news the travellers tell so trippingly.
And, Oh, Aigisthos, he, you may be sure,
Will laugh to hear it! . . . Ah, I am a poor
Old woman! Such a tangle as they were,
The troubles in this House, and hard to bear,
Long years back, and all aching in my breast!
But none that hurt like this! Through all the rest . . .
Well, I was sore, but lived them down and smiled.
But little Orestes, my heart's care, the child
I took straight from his mother; and save me
He had no other nurse! And, Oh, but he
Could scream and order me to tramp the dark!
Aye, times enough, and trouble enough, and stark
Wasted at that! A small thing at the breast,
That has no sense, you tend it like a beast,
By guesswork. For he never speaks, not he,
A babe in swaddling-clothes, if thirst maybe
Or hunger comes, or any natural need.
The little belly takes its way. Indeed,
'Twas oft a prophet he wanted, not a nurse;
And often enough my prophecies, of course,
Came late; and then the heaps to wash and dry!
And fuller's work as much as nurse's! Aye,
I followed both trades, from the day when first

His father gave me Orestes to be nursed. . .
And now he is dead; and strangers come and tell
The news to me. And this poor miserable
Old woman must go tell the plunderer
Who shames this house! Oh, glad he will be to hear!

LEADER.

How doth she bid him come? In what array?

NURSE.

I take thee not. . . . What is it ye would say?

LEADER.

Comes he with spears to guard him or alone?

NURSE.

She bids him bring the spearmen of the throne.

LEADER.

Speak not that bidding to our loathèd Lord!
"Alone, quick, fearing nothing" is the word.
So speak, and in thy heart let joy prevail!
The teller straighteneth many a crookèd tale.

NURSE.

What ails thee? Are these tidings to thy mind?

LEADER.

The wind is cold, but Zeus may change the wind

NURSE.

How, when Orestes, our one hope, is dead?

LEADER.

Not yet! So much the dullest seer can read.

NURSE.

What mean'st thou? There is something ye have heard!

LEADER.

Go, tell thy tale. Obey thy mistress' word!
God, where He guardeth, guardeth faithfully.

NURSE.

I go.—May all be well, God helping me!

[*The* NURSE *goes out.*

CHORUS. [*Strophe* 1.

— Lo, I pray God, this day:
Father of Olympus, hear!
Grant thy fortunes healingly
Fall for them who crave to see
In this House of lust and fear,
Purity, purity.
—I have sinned not, I have spoken
In the name of Law unbroken;
Zeus, as thou art just, we pray thee
Be his guard!

ALL.

There is One within the Gate
Of his foemen, where they wait;
Oh, prefer him, Zeus, before them

And exalt and make him great:
Two- and threefold shall he pay thee
Love's reward.

[*Antistrophe* 1.

Seest thou one lost, alone,
Child of him who loved thee well?
As a young steed he doth go,
Maddened, in the yoke of woe:
Oh, set measure on the swell,
Forth and fro, forth and fro,
Of the beating hoofs that bear him
Through this bitter course. Oh, spare him!
By his innocence we pray thee
Be his guard!

ALL.

There is One within the Gate
Of his foemen, where they wait;
Oh, prefer him, Zeus, before them
And exalt and make him great:
Two- and threefold shall he pay thee
Love's reward.

[*Strophe* 2.

—Gods of the treasure-house within,
One-hearted, where the bronzen door
On darkness gloateth and on gold:
With present cleansing wash the old
Blight of this house: and aged Sin
Amid the gloom shall breed no more!

ALL.

And, O light of the Great Cavern, let it be
That this Man's house look up again, and see,

Till the dead veil of scorn
And long darkness shall be torn,
And the kind faces shine and old Argolis be free!

[*Antistrophe* 2.

—And, Oh, let Hermês, Maia-born,
Be near, who moveth in his kind,
As the wind blows, to help at need:
The word he speaketh none may read:
Before his eyes the Day is torn
With darkness and the Night is blind.

ALL.

And, O Light of the Great Cavern, let it be
That this Man's house look up again, and see,
Till the dead veil of scorn
And long darkness shall be torn,
And the kind faces shine and old Argolis be free!

[*Strophe* 3.

—Then, then the prison shall unclose:
A wind of Freedom stream above:
A flood which faileth not, a voice
Telling of women that rejoice,
One harp in many souls, one spell
Enchanted. Ho, the ship goes well!
For me, for me, this glory grows,
And Evil flies from those I love.

ALL.

Oh, in courage and in power,
When the deed comes and the hour,

As she crieth to thee "Son,"
Let thy "Father" quell her breath!
But a stroke and it is done,
The unblamèd deed of death.

[*Antistrophe* 3

—The heart of Perseus, darkly strong,
Be lifted in thy breast to-day:
For them thou lovest in the grave,
For them on Earth, be blind, be brave:
Uphold the cloak before thine eyes
And see not while thy Gorgon dies;
But him who sowed the seed of wrong,
Go, look him in the face and slay!

ALL.

Oh, in courage and in power,
When the deed comes and the hour,
As she crieth to thee "Son,"
Let thy "Father" quell her breath!
But a stroke and it is done,
The unblamèd deed of death.

[*Enter from the country* AIGISTHOS.

AIGISTHOS.

A message called me; else I scarce had thought
To have come so quick. 'Tis a strange rumour, brought,
They tell me, by some Phocian wayfarers
In passing: strange, nor grateful to our ears.
Orestes dead! A galling load it were
And dripping blood for this poor House to bear,

Still scored and festerous with its ancient wound.
How shall I deem it? Living truth and sound?
Or tales of women, born to terrify,
That wildly leap, and up in mid-air die?
What know ye further? I would have this clear.

LEADER.

We heard the tale; but go within and hear
With thine own ears. A rumoured word hath weak
Force, when the man himself is there to speak.

AIGISTHOS.

Hear him I will, and question him beside.
Was this man with Orestes when he died,
Or speaks he too from rumour? If he lies . . .
He cannot cheat a mind that is all eyes.

[*He enters the House.*

CHORUS.

Zeus, Zeus, how shall I speak, and how
Begin to pray thee and beseech?
How shall I ever mate with speech
This longing, and obtain my vow?

The edges of the blades that slay
Creep forth to battle: shall it be
Death, death for all eternity,
On Agamemnon's House this day;

Or sudden a new light of morn,
A beacon fire for freedom won,
The old sweet rule from sire to son,
And golden Argolis reborn?

Against two conquerors all alone,
His last death-grapple, deep in blood,
Orestes joineth. . . O great God,
Give victory!

[*Death-cry of* AIGISTHOS *within.*

Ha! The deed is done!

LEADER.

How? What is wrought? Stand further from the door
Till all is over. Move apart before
Men mark, and deem us sharers in the strife.
For after this 'tis war, for death or life.

[*The Women stand back almost unseen. A Household* SLAVE *rushes out from the main Door, and beats at the door of the Women's House.*

SLAVE.

Ho!
Treason! Our master! Treason! Haste amain!
Treason within. Aigisthos lieth slain.
Unbar, unbar, with all the speed ye may
The women's gates! Oh, tear the bolts away! . . .
God, but it needs a man, a lusty one,
To help us, when all time for help is gone!
What ho!
I babble to deaf ears, and labouring cry,
To men sleep-charmèd, words that fail and die.
Where art thou, Clytemnestra? What dost thou? . . .
'For God, 'tis like to be her own neck now,
In time's revenge, that shivers to its fate.

[*Enter* CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What wouldst thou? Why this clamour at our gate?

SLAVE.

The dead are risen, and he that liveth slain.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Woe's me! The riddle of thy speech is plain.
By treason we shall die, even as we slew. .
Ho, there, mine axe of battle! Let us try
Who conquereth and who falleth, he or I . . .
To that meseemeth we are come, we two.

[*Enter from the House* ORESTES *with drawn sword.*

ORESTES.

'Tis thou I seek. With him my work is done.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*suddenly failing*).

Woe's me!
Aigisthos, my beloved, my gallant one!

ORESTES.

Thou lovest him! Go then and lay thine head
Beside him. Thou shalt not betray the dead.

[*Makes as if to stab her.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hold, O my son! My child, dost thou not fear
To strike this breast? Hast thou not slumbered here,
Thy gums draining the milk that I did give?

ORESTES (*lowering his sword*).

Pylades!
What can I? Dare I let my mother live?

PYLADES.

Where is God's voice from out the golden cloud
At Pytho? Where the plighted troth we vowed?
Count all the world thy foe save God on high.

ORESTES.

I will obey. Thou counsellest righteously.—
Follow! Upon his breast thou shalt expire
Whom, living, thou didst hold above my sire.
Go, lie in his dead arms! . . . This was the thing
Thou lovedst, loathing thine anointed King.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I nursed thee. I would fain grow old with thee.

ORESTES.

Shall one who slew my father house with me?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Child, if I sinned, Fate had her part therein.

ORESTES.

Then Fate is here, with the reward of sin.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou reck'st not of a Mother's Curse, my child?

ORESTES.

Not hers who cast me out into the wild.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Cast out? I sent thee to a war-friend's Hall.

ORESTES.

A free man's heir, ye sold me like a thrall.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If thou wast sold, where is the price I got?

ORESTES.

The price! . . . For very shame I speak it not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Speak. But tell, too, thy father's harlotries.

ORESTES.

Judge not the toiler, thou who sitt'st at ease!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A woman starves with no man near, my son.

ORESTES.

Her man's toil wins her bread when he is gone.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To kill thy mother, Child: is that thy will?

ORESTES.

I kill thee not: thyself it is doth kill.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A mother hath her Watchers: think and quail!

ORESTES.

How shall I 'scape my Father's if I fail?

CLYTEMNESTRA (*to herself*).

Living, I cry for mercy to a tomb!

ORESTES.

Yea, from the grave my father speaks thy doom.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah God! The serpent that I bare and fed!

ORESTES.

Surely of truth prophetic is the dread
That walketh among dreams. Most sinfully
Thou slewest: now hath Sin her will of thee.

[*He drives* CLYTEMNESTRA *before him into the palace. The* CHORUS *come forward again.*

LEADER.

For these twain also in their fall I weep.
Yet, seeing Orestes now through mire so deep
Hath climbed the crest, I can but pray this eye
Of the Great House be not made blind and die.

CHORUS. [*Strophe* 1.

Judgment came in the end
To Troy and the Trojans' lord,
(O Vengeance, heavy to fall!)
There came upon Atreus' Hall

Lion and lion friend,
A sword came and a sword.
A walker in Pytho's way
On the neck of her kings hath trod,
A beggar and outcast, yea,
But led by God.

[*Antistrophe* 1.

Came He of the laughing lure,
The guile and the secret blow,
(O Vengeance, subtle to slay!)
But there held his hand that day
The Daughter of Zeus, the pure,
Justice yclept below.
Justice they called her name,
For where is a goodlier?
And her breath is a sword of flame
On the foes of her.

ALL.

Cry, Ho for the perils fled,
For the end of the long dismay!
For the spoiling ended now;
For the Castle's lifted brow,
For the two defilers dead,
And the winding of Fortune's way!

Even as Apollo gave [*Strophe* 2.
His charge on the Mountain, He
Who holdeth the Earth-heart Cave,
Hast thou wrought innocently
Great evil, hindered long,
Tracking thy mother's sin . . .
Is the power of God hemmed in

So strangely to work with wrong?
Howbeit, let praise be given
To that which is throned in Heaven:
The Gods are strong.

[*Antistrophe* 2.

And soon shall the Perfect Hour
O'er the Castle's threshold stone
Pass with his foot of power,
When out to the dark is thrown
The sin thereof and the stain
By waters that purify.
Now, now with a laughing eye
God's fortune lieth plain;
And a cry on the wind is loud:
"The stranger that held us bowed
Is fallen again!"

ALL.

O light of the dawn to be!
The curb is broken in twain,
And the mouth of the House set free.
Up, O thou House, and see!
Too long on the face of thee
The dust hath lain!

[*The doors are thrown open, and* ORESTES *discovered standing over the dead bodies of* AIGISTHOS *and* CLYTEMNESTRA. *The Household is grouped about him and Attendants hold the great red robe in which Agamemnon was murdered.*

ORESTES (*He speaks with ever-increasing excitement*).

Behold your linkèd conquerors! Behold
My Father's foes, the spoilers of the fold!
Oh, lordly were these twain, when thronèd high,
And lovely now, as he who sees them lie
Can read, two lovers faithful to their troth!
They vowed to slay my father, or that both
As one should die, and both the vows were true!
And mark, all ye who hear this tale of rue,
This robe, this trap that did my father greet,
Irons of the hand and shackling of the feet!
Outstretch it north and south: cast wide for me
This man-entangler, that our Sire may see—
Not mine, but He who watcheth all deeds done,
Yea, all my mother's wickedness, the Sun—
And bear me witness, when they seek some day
To judge me, that in justice I did slay
This woman: for of him I take no heed.
He hath the adulterer's doom, by law decreed.
But she who planned this treason 'gainst her own
Husband, whose child had lived beneath her zone—
Oh, child of love, now changed to hate and blood!—
What is she? Asp or lamprey of the mud,
That, fangless, rotteth with her touch, so dire
That heart's corruption and that lust like fire?
Woman? Not woman, though I speak right fair.

[*His eyes are caught by the great red robe.*

A dead man's winding-sheet? A hunter's snare?
A trap, a toil, a tangling of the feet. . . .
I think a thief would get him this, a cheat

That robs the stranger. He would snare them so,
And kill them, kill them, and his heart would glow. . . .
Not in my flesh, not in my house, O God,
May this thing live! Ere that, Oh, lift thy rod
And smiting blast me, dead without a child!

[*He stops exhausted.*

CHORUS.

O deeds of anger and of pain!
O woman miserably slain!
Alas! Alas!
And he who lives shall grieve again.

ORESTES.

Did she the deed or no? This robe defiled
Doth bear me witness, where its web is gored,
How deep the dye was of Aigisthos' sword;
And blood hath joined with the old years, to spoil
The many tinctures of the broidered coil.
Oh, now I weep, now praise him where he died,
And calling on this web that pierced his side. . .
Pain, pain is all my doing, all my fate,
My race, and my begetting: and I hate
This victory that sears me like a brand. . . .

CHORUS.

No mortal thro' this life shall go
For ever portionless of woe.
Alas! Alas!
It comes to all, or swift or slow.

ORESTES.

Yet wait: for I would have you understand.
The end I know not. But methinks I steer

Unseeing, like some broken charioteer,
By curbless visions borne. And at my heart
A thing of terror knocketh, that will start
Sudden a-song, and she must dance to hear.
But while I am still not mad, I here declare
To all who love me, and confess, that I
Have slain my mother, not unrighteously;
Who with my father's blood hath stained the sod
Of Argos and drawn down the wrath of God.
And the chief spell that wrought me to the deed
Is Loxias, Lord of Pytho, who decreed
His high commandment: if this thing I dare,
He lays on me no sin: if I forbear . . .
I cannot speak his judgement: none can know
The deeps thereof, no arrow from the bow
Out-top it. Therefore here ye see me, how
I go prepared, with wreaths and olive bough,
To kneel in supplication on the floor
Of Loxias, touch the fire that evermore
Men call the undying, and the midmost stone
Of earth, flying this blood which is mine own.
And how these evil things were wrought, I pray
All men of Argos on an after day
Remember, and bear witness faithfully
When Menelaüs comes. . . . And take from me,
Living or dead, a wanderer and outcast
For ever, this one word, my last, my last. . . .

LEADER.

Nay, all is well. Leave no ill omen here,
Nor bind upon thy lips the yoke of fear.
All Argos thou hast freed, and with one sweep
Two serpents' heads hurled reeking to the deep.

ORESTES (*overcome with sudden terror*).

Ah! Ah!
Ye bondmaids! They are here: like Gorgons, gowned
In darkness; all bewreathed and interwound
With serpents! . . . I shall never rest again.

LEADER.

What fantasies, most father-loved of men,
Haunt thee? Be strong, thou conqueror! Have no fear!

ORESTES.

These are no fantasies. They are here; they are here,
The Hounds of my dead Mother, hot to kill.

LEADER.

The blood upon thine hand is reeking still:
For that the turmoil in thy heart is loud.

ORESTES.

O Lord Apollo! More and more they crowd
Close, and their eyes drip blood, most horrible!

LEADER.

One cleansing hast thou. Loxias can quell
Thy tempest with his touch, and set thee free.

ORESTES.

You cannot see them. I alone can see.
I am hunted. . . . I shall never rest again.

[*Exit* ORESTES.

CHORUS.

— Farewell. May blessing guide thee among men.
— May God with love watch over thee, and heed
Thy goings and be near thee at thy need.

ALL.

Behold a third great storm made wild
By winds of wrath within the race,
Hath shook this castle from its place.
The ravin of the murdered child
First broke Thyestes in his pride:
Second, a warrior and a King,
Chief of Achaia's warfaring,
Was smitten in the bath and died.
And Third, this Saviour or this last
Doom from the deep. What end shall fall,
Or peace, or death outsweeping all,
When night comes and the Wrath is past?

[*Exeunt.*

NOTES

THE beginning of this play is lost, through an injury to the single MS. on which it depends. The MS. only begins at "Ha, what sight is this?" which is conventionally numbered l. 10, though probably there were at least twenty or thirty lines preceding it. Curiously enough, three passages from the missing part are quoted by different ancient authors, so that a good deal of it can be supplied.

P. 131, l. 2: The meaning of this phrase was obscure even to Aeschylus' contemporaries, and is discussed in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, 1126 ff. It seems to mean that Hermês Psychopompos (Guide of the Dead) is son of Zeus Chthonios (Zeus of the Underworld). "Saviour" and "Help in War" are other titles of Hermês.

P. 132, l. 6, Înachos: The river of Argos. So Achilles on reaching manhood cut off his long hair as a gift to the River Spercheios. Rivers in a land subject to drought were worshipped as "life-giving" or "rearers of young men" (*κουροτρόφοι*).

P. 133, l. 22, CHORUS: The Chorus are slave women taken in war. We know no more of them. They certainly do not seem to be Trojans, and, like the Nurse later, they have the feelings of loyal old retainers towards the House, hating Aigisthos and loving

the memory of Agamemnon. Throughout the play Aigisthos is represented as a usurper and a tyrant, holding his rule by fear. Cf. (ll. 885 ff., 935 ff.) the exultant tone of the two last choruses.

P. 133, l. 32, "Dread, very dread": Clytemnestra had a dangerous dream. If she had gone at once to a skilled interpreter, he might possibly have given it a favourable interpretation and thus partly averted the consequences. Instead of this she shrieked in terror. That shriek was itself an interpretation which could never be explained away. The prophets, when consulted, explained that the dream came from the anger of Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra then made the fatal mistake of sending offerings to his grave to appease his wrath. This was far too slight a thing to appease him; but it did awake him, and so enabled him to help his avengers.

P. 134, l. 61, "Who knows the great Wheel's swing," etc.: A difficult passage. It seems to mean that justice (i.e. both retribution to the sinner and reparation to the sinned-against) sometimes comes quick and clear; sometimes is long delayed, and sometimes is wrapt in night, i.e. no one can say for certain whether it comes at all.

P. 135, l. 84: Electra feels that it is a mockery, and perhaps an impiety, to pour the peace-offerings of the murderess. The Leader urges her not to hesitate, but deliberately to use the offerings as an appeal for vengeance. The thought at first appals her, but she nerves herself to it. In her prayer she deliberately tells her father the things that will most sting him into wakefulness. The passage "I lay these tokens down," seems to mean that she puts upon the grave

stones or some other objects to act as a perpetual reminder and keep her prayer alive.

P. 138, l. 151, CHORUS: "Let fall the tear," etc.: The grave is a barrier-stone between the dead and the living, "A door, Where good nor evil entereth any more"; yet not absolutely so. The prayers of his children, and the tears of their suffering, may after all get past the barriers and reach the "darkened heart" of the dead. This idea is in the essence of the play.

P. 139, ll. 165-210, Recognition scene: It was a traditional story that Electra had recognized Orestes by a lock of hair, a footprint, and a bit of weaving. Aristophanes (*Clouds*, 534 ff.) speaks of his comedy, "like Electra of old, recognizing its brother's tress" when it meets a spectator of true Attic taste. It would be a mistake to apply realist canons to this ancient tale. Among barefooted peoples family likenesses are apt to be chiefly traced in the feet and hair. Both Arab and Australian "trackers" are cited to this effect, as also is the *Odyssey* (iv. 148 ff., xix. 358, 381). See Tucker's *Choëphoroe*, p. lxvi. It is interesting to note that Sophocles in his *Electra* omits the traditional signs altogether. Euripides uses them, but uses them in a completely original way to illustrate Electra's state of mind. An old peasant tries to show the "signs" to her. She longs to believe that Orestes has come but in fear of disappointment refuses to look at them and rejects every suggestion of comfort. See my version and note there. (Pp. 161 ff., ll. 508-548.)

P. 141, l. 211, "Torment of heart and blinding of the brain": Electra bows down and buries her face in her hands. When she next looks up, there is an armed man like her father standing just above her

father's tomb. Note that she begins by refusing to believe. A motive which is afterwards deepened and elaborated by Euripides has been suggested by Aeschylus. See previous note.

P. 145, ll. 269 ff., "Oh, Loxias shall not mock," etc.: Orestes at the end of the play goes mad; before that certain of his speeches are strangely violent and incoherent. Scholars have generally supposed the text to be exceptionally corrupt, but I think it will be found that this particular tone of incoherence never comes except when there is a mention of Delphi and Apollo's command. I think, therefore, that the wildness of these speeches is intentional, and the madness of the end does not come unprepared. It will be noticed in the last scene with what psychological daring as well as subtlety Aeschylus depicts the final collapse of his hero's reason.

P. 145, l. 275, "The wild bull": Ought Orestes to accept a money payment to atone for his father's slaying, or, like a wild bull driven out from the herd, should he accept no peace but insist on a life for a life? The commutation of the blood-feud for a money payment was, of course, a softening of primitive manners. As such, it is elaborately provided for in various codes of early law. Yet, while it marks a social advance, at the same time it often involves a softening and weakening of the sense of duty in the individual. Orestes could probably have lived in comfort if he had been willing to accept a large blood-price from Aigisthos and say no more about it. He prefers, with all its misery and danger, the absolute fulfilment of his duty to his father. To us, and in this special case to Aeschylus, the rule of vengeance

seems savage. We speak glibly of the "duty of forgiveness." But it should be remembered that we expect the police to arrest the offender and the judge to see that he is hanged. In Orestes' days men had to do justice on the wicked with their own hands, or else leave them unpunished and triumphant.

P. 145, l. 290, "That bronze horror": The meaning is not known. It may be some instrument of torture, but more likely it is something intended to make a noise, like the bell sometimes worn by lepers in the Middle Ages, to warn people of the presence of the Accursed One.

P. 146, ll. 315-510, The Invocation: This extraordinary scene is really the heart of the play and gives to the *Choëphoroe* a strange supernatural atmosphere which is absent from both the *Electra* plays. There is no invocation scene in Sophocles; there is a brief one in Euripides (*Electra*, 671-685). It has great emotional effect, but is only about fifteen lines long, and does not attempt to produce the cumulative impression of this scene, in which we feel human suffering and love gradually breaking through the barriers of death and earth and darkness. At the end the dead Agamemnon is awake, and Orestes hardly needs to think about the details of his dangerous plot. A power more than mortal is behind him. It will be noticed how the scene works up, like certain religious litanies, to a pitch of more and more overpowering and almost hysterical emotion; then, in the regular Greek manner, it descends again to something like calm.

P. 149, l. 380, "Ah me, that word, that word": The thought that he himself hates his mother is what pierces Orestes' heart. In his next speech also

he is bewildered. Not till l. 434, "All, all dishonour," does he lose all scruple in the storm of his passion.

P. 151, ll. 428-442, "Ho, Mother; ho, thou, Mother, mine enemy!": First Electra tells of the shameful secret burial: this rouses Orestes to fury. Then the Leader tells of something worse. The murderess had mutilated the body; cut off the dead man's feet so that he could not pursue, and his hands so that he could not lay hold of her. This would make Agamemnon helpless, and so leave Orestes without hope. The unexpected abomination breaks Orestes down.—This device of terrified murderers is a piece of primitive magic. It is attributed to Clytemnestra by Sophocles (*Electra*, 445), and to the witch Medea by Apollonius Rhodius.

P. 154, l. 471, "The House hath healing": i.e. the House itself can cure bloodshed by bloodshed, sin by vengeance.

P. 156, l. 510, "Behold, ye have made a long and yearning praise": The dead must surely now be satisfied. Even if neglected for years he has now had such a lamentation as requites him for all.

P. 156, l. 515, "What power the Daemon hath which guardeth thee": The word Daemon has no connotation of evil in classical Greek.

P. 157, l. 517, "One dead and feeling not!": Not strictly consistent perhaps with the invocation scene, but psychologically right. The dead are past feeling . . . unless something very extraordinary is done to make them feel. Then, who knows?

P. 157, l. 527: Clytemnestra's dream that she gave birth to a serpent is traditional. It is found both

before Aeschylus and after. The asps of Libya and divers other serpent things were "matricides"; at birth they tore and killed their mother. See *Herodotus*, 3, 109; Euripides, *Orestes*, 479.

P. 159, l. 563, "An accent of Parnassian speech": It is interesting to note that there is no trace of Phocian dialect in Orestes' actual language later on. To make him talk broad Phocian would, according to convention, have made him "comic," like certain Boeotians, Spartans, and Scythians in Aristophanes. On the other hand, an Oriental colour is often allowed in tragic language, especially in lyric passages, e.g. in Aeschylus' *Persae*.

P. 159, l. 574 : The reading is doubtful. I read μ' οἱ for μοι and καλεῖν for βαλεῖν.

P. 160, l. 583, "One Below": i.e. Agamemnon.

P. 160, l. 585, Chorus: The sense of this chorus is often difficult and the text apparently corrupt, especially the end. "There are many terrible things, but none so terrible as a woman's passion; for instance (602), Althaea, daughter of Thestios, who slew her son Meleager; or (612) Skylla of Megara who betrayed her father Nîsos; or (631) the Lemnian women who slew their husbands; and, after all (623—a stanza has been transposed), have we not an example here in Clytemnestra?"

Althaea: See Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*. When her son Meleager was born she saw in the room the three Fates, one of whom foretold that Meleager should die when a red brand then burning in the fire was consumed. Althaea leapt out of bed and saved the brand. Afterwards, when Meleager fell in love with Atalanta, and in a feud on her behalf

killed his mother's two brethren, she threw the brand into the fire.

Skylla: Skylla, daughter of Nîsos, King of Megara, whose life depended on a magic lock of hair. She fell in love with Minos, who was besieging Megara, and betrayed her father to him. The rings of Cretan gold were apparently a love-gift.

Lemnos: The native women of Lemnos in one night rose and killed their Greek husbands, perhaps because the men had left them for Thracian concubines, perhaps for other reasons. See *Rise of the Greek Epic*, Ed. 4, p. 56.

P. 163, l. 652: The time is now evening and the scene is in front of the castle of the Atreidae. In Aeschylus' time there was probably no actual change made in the stage arrangements. The back wall represented a palace front, while in the centre of the orchestra was an altar or mound which stood for Agamemnon's tomb. In the first half of the play you attended to the tomb and ignored the back scene: in the second you attended to the castle and ignored the mound.

Observe the delay before the door is opened. This increases the dramatic tension and at the same time makes us feel that the House is "beset with evil." An ordinary great house would be thrown open at the first knock.

P. 164, l. 668: The first entrance of Clytemnestra, about whom we have thought and talked so much, is immensely important. She comes unexpected, standing suddenly in the great doorway where we last saw her, with blood on her brow and an axe in her hands, standing over the dead bodies (*Agamem-*

non, 1372). Before that we had seen her in the same position, hardly less sinister, calling Cassandra to her death: "Thou, likewise, come within." (*Agamemnon*, 1035.)

The first entrances of Clytemnestra in the two *Electra* plays are also striking. In Sophocles (*Electra*, 516) she bursts in upon Electra, like a termagant, in a sudden agony of rage. In Euripides (*Electra*, 998 ff.), when we have been led to expect a savage murderess, we meet "a sad, middle-aged woman whose first words are an apology, controlling quickly her old fires, anxious to be as little hated as possible."

P. 164, l. 674: There is an almost reckless fluency about Orestes' speech. In his bitterness he treats the news of his death as a trifle, not showing, nor expecting from others, any particular emotion about it. As a matter of fact, it gives Clytemnestra a greater shock than he expected. There is no reason to doubt the general sincerity of her words. Of course, she feared Orestes and knew he was her enemy. When it comes to a fight she is ready. At the same time, she has, as shown in the last scenes of the *Agamemnon*, an aching sense of disaster and friendlessness, and would like to think that, when all the rest of the House had gone under, the son she had sent away was living somewhere unhurt, and might perhaps be grateful to her. As it is, her old enemy, the Curse of the House, has beaten her.

P. 167, ll. 731-782: This poignant and vivid scene of the old nurse, ludicrous in her tears, is a striking departure from the stately conventions of Greek tragedy. Neither Sophocles nor Euripides has left any scene like it. Herakles in the *Alcestis* is pro-

Satyric. The panic-stricken Phrygian slave in the *Orestes* (*Orestes*, 1369-1530) is grotesque, but grotesquely horrible. In actual language the nurse's diction is on the whole tragic in colour and her metre correct: the grammar is rather loose and exclamatory. The name "Kilissa" (Cilician woman) suggests a slave.

P. 169, ll. 783-837: Again the sense is difficult and the text extremely uncertain. The Chorus pray in the name of their innocence and Agamemnon's long service to Zeus for pity; to the Gods of the Possessions of the House (Latin "penates," sometimes grouped together as Zeus Ktêsios) to help in the cleansing and rebuilding of the House (l. 800); to Apollo of the Cavern of Delphi, the God of Light, to help the House to light out of darkness (l. 812); to Hermês, the God of craft and secrecy, to help in a plot for the right (l. 819). The battle will be a battle of liberation from tyrants.

P. 172, l. 827: Orestes should think of his duty to his father and forget all else. As Perseus when killing the Gorgon turned his eyes away lest her face should freeze him to stone, so let Orestes, when he meets his mother, veil his eyes and smite.

P. 172, l. 838, AIGISTHOS: Just as they mention "him who sowed the seed of wrong," he enters. In a short but vivid scene we may perhaps see the man's harshness and confidence, but the truth is that in Aeschylus we are told almost nothing about Aigisthos except that Clytemnestra loved him.

P. 173, ll. 855-874: The usual rather low-toned, prayer-like song broken in upon by the death-cry. (Cf. *Agamemnon*, 1342, Euripides' *Electra*, 1163, etc.)

The Chorus naturally shrink away from the house in order not to be involved in imminent danger. This also has the advantage that it leaves the scene empty, and the slave who rushes out in terror crying for help finds no one. I receive the impression that the scene is meant to be dark, which would imply that at the end of the play Orestes stood between men holding torches. There is wonderful power in this scene. There are no men to help; no women even; all the world is dumb and asleep. Then suddenly there is Clytemnestra.

P. 175, l. 886, "The dead are risen": A deliberately riddling line, in the Greek meaning either: "I tell thee the dead are slaying the living man," or "I tell thee the living man is slaying the dead."

P. 175, l. 893, "Aigisthos, my beloved": Up to this moment she has been ready to fight. The death of her beloved unstrings her. One would like to know whether Aeschylus meant her actually to have the axe and drop it, or whether Orestes is intended to come too soon. Note with what intensity even when the fight has gone out of her she fences for her life. Every line of the scene is charged with meaning and feeling. The thing that breaks her is the sudden realization (928) that this is the serpent of her dream. An interesting piece of technique which I have not tried to represent is here found in the original. Orestes' words in 927 are so arranged as to produce almost exactly the word "hisses" (*σοὐρίζει* for *σοι ὁρίζει* = *συρίζει*).

P. 177, l. 920, "A woman starves": This is her first argument in *Agamemnon*, 962 ff.: "That any woman thus should sit alone," etc.

P. 178, ll. 935-972, CHORUS: A short song of exultation. Justice has come both to Troy and to Argos. Hermês, the God of Guile, has done it, but Justice held his hand and he only did her will. We have had several times already the scruples of Orestes' conscience, but this is the first doubt expressed by the Chorus as to the righteousness of the mother-murder. "Is the power of God hemmed in so strangely to work with wrong?" All doubts, however, are swallowed up in joy at the liberation of Argos and the downfall of the tyrants.

P. 181, l. 973-end: This marvellous scene scarcely needs comment. The showing of the robe in which Agamemnon was slain is, perhaps, imitated in the Forum Scene of *Julius Caesar*, which came to Shakespeare direct from Plutarch's *Lives* (*Brutus*, ch. 20, *Antony*, ch. 14). But the main interest here is in something quite different. The madness of which we have seen the approaching shadow now closes in upon Orestes. The first definite sign of it comes at l. 996, where, as Conington followed by Dr. Verrall pointed out, he tries to find a name to describe his mother. As he gropes for the word, the great crimson robe with the stains of blood obsesses his mind and he calls her "a winding-sheet, a snare, a net," and so on. (So Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, 114, calls her "a net and a snare.") We may notice that "dead without a child" (1006) is a more awful curse in Greek than in English. He appears at this point to sink into speechlessness, only to rouse himself more fiercely at l. 1010: "Did she the deed or no?" The few low-toned lines of music by the Chorus add a great beauty to the scene.

P. 183, l. 1043: Orestes' last sentence is unfinished; as he was evidently going to leave behind him some word of bad omen, the Leader of the Chorus interrupts with words of comfort. As she mentions the "two serpents' heads" (1048) there is a cry of horror, and the "armed slayer" is seen appealing to the slave women to protect him. He has seen the shapes with snaky hair beginning to crowd upon him. The last touch of tragedy is in 1061, when he realizes that he is alone in his suffering ("You cannot see them; I alone can see") and knows that he "shall never rest again."

P. 185, ll. 1065-1076: The last Chorus states, with a clarity unusual in Aeschylus and more characteristic of Euripides, the exact problem of the Trilogy. First came the sin of Atreus against the children of Thyestes —though that too was an act of revenge; second, the punishment of that by Thyestes' son Aigisthos when he and Clytemnestra murdered Agamemnon; thirdly, the punishment of that second crime at Apollo's bidding by Orestes. Is Orestes the Third Saviour, or is his act only another link in the interminable chain of crime? If the Curse is now brought to sleep, is that because the House is really purified or because there is nothing left for the Curse to work upon? For the "Third Saviour," see my *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, pp. 48 ff. "First comes this year with its pride and its pollution, then the winter that kills it, then the clean spring. First comes the crime, then the punishment, which is only another crime, then perhaps the redemption." Whether Orestes is a saviour or a final caster-down of the race is determined in the next play, the *Eumenides*.

THE EUMENIDES

(THE FURIES)

OF AESCHYLUS

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

The Pythian Prophetess.
Orestes.
The God Apollo.
The Goddess Pallas Athena.
The Ghost of Clytemnestra.
Chorus of Furies (*Eumenides*).
Chorus of Athenian Citizens.

The play was first produced in the archonship of Philoclês (458 B.C.). *The First Prize was won by Aeschylus with the "Agamemnon," "Choëphoroe," "Eumenides," and the Satyr-play "Proteus."*

THE EUMENIDES

The Scene represents the front of the Temple of APOLLO *at Delphi; great doors at the back lead to the inner shrine and the central Altar. The Pythian* PROPHETESS *is standing before the Doors.*

PROPHETESS.

First of all Gods I worship in this prayer
Earth, the primeval prophet; after her
Themis, the Wise, who on her mother's throne—
So runs the tale—sat second; by whose own
Accepted will, with never strife nor stress,
Third reigned another earth-born Titaness,
Phoebê; from whom (for that he bears her name)
To Phoebus as a birthtide gift it came.
He left his isle, he left his Delian seas,
He passed Athena's wave-worn promontories,
In haste this great Parnassus to possess
And Delphi, thronèd in the wilderness.
And with him came, to escort him and revere,
A folk born of Hephaistos, pioneer
Of God's way, making sweet a bitter land.
And much this people and the King whose hand
Then steered them, Delphos, glorified his name,
Till Zeus into his heart put mystic flame

And prophet here enthroned him, fourth in use :
So Loxias' lips reveal the thought of Zeus.
These gods be foremost in all prayers of mine,
Who have held the Throne. Next, She before the shrine,
Pallas, is praisèd, and the Nymphs who keep
Yon old Corycian bird-belovèd steep,
Deep-caverned, where things blessèd come and go.
And Bromios walks the mountain, well I know,
Since first he led his Maenad host on high
And doomed King Pentheus like a hare to die.
And Pleistos' fountains and Poseidon's power
I call, and Him who brings the Perfect Hour,
Zeus, the Most Highest. With which prayers I go
To seat me, priestess, on the Throne. And, oh,
May God send blessing on mine entrance, more
And deeper than He e'er hath sent of yore !
If there be present men of Greece but not
Of Delphi, let them enter as the lot
Ordains ; I speak but as God leadeth me.

[*She enters the Inner Shrine, and the stage is for a moment empty. Then she returns, grasping at the wall for support.*

Ah ! Horrors, horrors, dire to speak or see,
From Loxias' chamber drive me reeling back.
My knees are weak beneath me, and I lack
The strength to fly. . . . O hands, drag me from here
If feet fail ! . . . An old woman, and in fear,
A thing of naught, a babe in helplessness !
I made my way into the Holy Place,
And there, at the inmost Altar of the world,
A man abhorred of God, his body hurled

Earthward in desperate prayer ; blood on his hand
Yet reeking, and a naked new-drawn brand
Wreathed in beseeching wool, a suppliant's weed
Of snow-white fleece . . . so much mine eyes could read.
But out in front of him a rout unknown
Of women sleepeth, flung from throne to throne
Women ? Nay, never women ! Gorgons more :
And yet not like the Gorgon shapes of yore. .
I saw a picture once of woman things
That ravished Phineus' banquet. But no wings
Have these ; all shadows, black, abominable.
The voices of their slumber rise and swell,
Back-beating, and their eyes drop gouts of gore.
Their garb, it is no garb to show before
God's altar nor the hearths of human kind
I cannot read what lineage lies behind
These shapes, nor what land, having borne such breed,
Hath trembled not before and shall not bleed
Hereafter. Let Apollo great in power
Take to his care the peril of this hour :
Being Helper, Prophet, Seer of things unseen,
The stainèd hearth he knoweth to make clean.

[*The* PROPHETESS *departs. The doors open and reveal the inner shrine,* ORESTES *at the Altar, the* FURIES *asleep about him, and* APOLLO *standing over them.*

APOLLO.

I fail thee not. For ever more I stay,
Or watching at thy side or far away,
Thy guard, and iron against thine enemies.
Even now my snares have closèd upon these.

The ragers sleep : the Virgins without love,
So grey, so old, whom never god above
Hath kissed, nor man, nor from the wilderness
One wild beast. They were born for wickedness
And sorrow ; for in evil night they dwell,
And feed on the great darkness that is Hell,
Most hated by the Gods and human thought.
But none the less, fly thou and falter not.
For these shall hunt thee, ever on through earth
Unwandered, through the vast lands of the North,
The sea-ways and the cities ringed with sea.
But faint not. Clasp thy travail unto thee ;
On till thou come to Pallas' Rock, and fold
Thine arms in prayer about her image old.
In Athens there be hearts to judge, there be
Words that bring peace ; and I shall set thee free
At last from all this woe.—If thou didst kill
Thy mother, was it not my word and will ?

ORESTES.

Not to betray thou knowest. Oh, ponder yet
One other lesson, Lord—not to forget !
Thy strength in doing can be trusted well.

[ORESTES *departs*.

APOLLO.

Remember ! Let no fear thy spirit quell !
Do thou, O Hermes, brother of my blood,
Watch over him. Thou guide of man, make good
The name thou bearest, shepherding again

My suppliant. Him who pitieth suffering men
Zeus pitieth, and his ways are sweet on earth.

[*Exit* APOLLO. *Presently enter the* GHOST *of* CLYTEMNESTRA. *She watches the sleeping* FURIES.

GHOST.

Ye sleep. O God, and what are sleepers worth?
'Tis you, have left me among all the dead
Dishonoured. Alway, for that blood I shed,
Rebuke and hissing cease not, and I go
Wandering in shame. Oh, hear! . . . For that old blow
I struck still I am hated, but for his
Who smote me, being of my blood, there is
No wrath in all the darkness: there is none
Cares for a mother murdered by her son.
Open thine heart to see this gash!—(*She shows the wound in her throat.*) In sleep
The heart hath many eyes and can see deep:
'Tis daylight makes man's fate invisible.
Oft of my bounty ye have lapt your fill;
Oft the sad peace of wineless cups to earth
I have poured, and midmurk feastings on your hearth
Burned, when no other god draws near to eat.
And all these things ye have cast beneath your feet,
And he is fled, fled lightly like a fawn
Out of your nets! With mocking he is gone
And twisting of the lips. . . I charge you, hark!
This is my life, my death. Oh, shake the dark
From off you, Children of the Deep. 'Tis I,
Your dream, I, Clytemnestra, stand and cry.

[*Moaning among the* FURIES.

Moan on, but he is vanished and forgot.
So strong the prayers of them that love me not!
[*Moaning.*
Too sound ye sleep.—And have ye for the dead
No pity? . . . And my son, my murderer, fled!
[*Groaning.*
Ye groan; ye slumber. Wake! . . What task have ye
To do on earth save to work misery?
[*Groaning*
Can sleep and weariness so well conspire
To drain the fell she-dragon of her fire?

[*Sharp repeated muttering: then words "At him! At him! Catch, catch, catch! Ah, beware!"*

Ah, hunting in your dreams, and clamorous yet,
Tired bloodhounds that can sleep but not forget!
How now? Awake! Be strong! And faithful keep
Thy lust of pain through all the drugs of sleep.
Thou feel'st my scorn? Aye, feel and agonize
Within; such words are scourges to the wise.
Thy blood-mist fold about him, like a doom.
Waste him with vapour from thy burning womb.
A second chase is death! . . Pursue! Pursue!

[*The* Ghost *vanishes as the* Furies *gradually wake.*

Leader of the Furies.

Awake! Quick, waken her as I wake you!
Thou sleepest? Rise; cast slumber from thy brain
And search. Is our first hunt so all in vain?

FURIES (*speaking severally*).

— O rage, rage and wrath ! Friends, they have done me wrong !
— Many and many a wrong I have suffered, mockeries all !
— Evil and violent deeds, a shame that lingereth long
And bitter, bitter as gall !
— The beast is out of the toils, out of the toils and away !
— I slept, and I lost my prey.

— What art thou, O Child of Zeus ? A thief and a cozener !
— Hast broken beneath thy wheels them that were holy and old ?
— A godless man and an evil son, he but kneels in prayer,
And straight he is in thy fold.
— Thou hast chosen the man who spilt his mother's blood !
— Are these things just, thou God?

— As a raging charioteer mid-grippeth his goad to bite
Beneath the belly, beneath the flank, where the smart is hot,
There riseth out of my dreams Derision with hands to smite ;
As a wretch at the block is scourged when the scourger hateth aright,
And the shuddering pain dies not.

— These be the deeds ye do, ye Gods of the younger race :
Ye break the Law at your will; your high throne drips with gore,
The foot is wet and the head. There is blood in the Holy Place !
The Heart of Earth uplifteth its foulness in all men's face,
Clean nevermore, nevermore !

— Blood, thou holy Seer, there is blood on thy burning hearth.
Thine inmost place is defiled, and thine was the will and the word.
Thou hast broken the Law of Heaven, exalted the things of Earth ;
The hallowed Portions of old thine hand hath blurred.

— Thou knowest to hurt my soul ; yea, but shalt save not him.
The earth may open and hide, but never shall he be freed.
Defiling all he goes, there where in exile dim
Many defilers more wait and bleed.

Enter Apollo.

Apollo.

Avaunt, I charge you ! Get ye from my door !
Darken this visionary dome no more !
Quick, lest ye meet that snake of bitter wing
That leaps a-sudden from my golden string,

And in your agony spue forth again
The black froth ye have sucked from tortured men!
This floor shall be no harbour to your feet.
Are there not realms where Law upon her seat
Smites living head from trunk? Where prisoners bleed
From gougèd eyes? Children with manhood's seed
Blasted are there; maimed foot and severed hand,
And stoning, and a moan through all the land
Of men impaled to die. There is the board
Whereat ye feast, and, feasting, are abhorred
Of heaven.—But all the shapes of you declare
Your souls within. Some reeking lion's lair
Were your fit dwelling, not this cloistered Hall
Of Mercy, which your foulness chokes withal.
Out, ye wild goats unherded! Out, ye drove
Accursed, that god nor devil dares to love!

[*During this speech the* FURIES *fly confusedly from the Temple down into the Orchestra. The* LEADER *turns.*

LEADER.

Phoebus Apollo, in thy turn give heed!
I hold thee not a partner in this deed;
Thou hast wrought it all. The guilt is thine alone.

APOLLO.

What sayst thou there?—One word, and then begone.

LEADER.

Thou spakest and this man his mother slew.

APOLLO.

I spoke, and he avenged his father. True

LEADER.

Thou stoodest by, to accept the new-shed gore.

APOLLO.

I bade him turn for cleansing to my door.

LEADER.

Ha ! And revilest us who guide his feet ?

APOLLO.

Ye be not clean to approach this Mercy Seat.

LEADER.

We be by Law eternal what we be.

APOLLO.

And what is that ? Reveal thy dignity.

LEADER.

We hunt from home his mother's murderer.

APOLLO.

A husband-murdering woman, what of her ?

LEADER.

'Twas not one blood in slayer and in slain.

APOLLO.

How? Would ye count as a light thing and vain
The perfect bond of Hera and high Zeus?
Yea, and thy word dishonoureth too the use
Of Cypris, whence love groweth to his best.
The fate-ordainèd meeting, breast to breast,
Of man and woman is a tie more sure
Than oath or pact, if Justice guards it pure.
If them so joined ye heed not when they slay,
Nor rise in wrath, nor smite them on their way,
Unrighteous is thine hunting of this man,
Orestes. Why on him is all thy ban
Unloosed? The other never broke thy rest . . .
But Pallas, child of Zeus, shall judge this quest.

LEADER.

I cleave to him. I leave him never more.

APOLLO.

Oh, hunt thy fill! Make sorrow doubly sore.

LEADER.

Abridge not thou the Portions of my lot.

APOLLO.

Keep thou thy portions. I will touch them not.

LEADER.

Thou hast thy greatness by the throne of God;
I . . . But the scent draws of that mother's blood.
I come! I come! I hunt him to the grave. . .

[*The* FURIES *go out on the track of* ORESTES.

APOLLO.

'Tis mine then to bring succour, and to save
My suppliant. Earth and Heaven are both afraid
For God's wrath, if one helpless is betrayed.

[APOLLO *returns behind the shrine, and the doors close. When they open again, they reveal, in place of* APOLLO'S *Central Altar, the Statue of* ATHENA PARTHENOS*: the scene now represents the Temple of Athena in Athens.*

Enter ORESTES, *worn with travel and suffering.*

ORESTES.

Pallas Athena, from Apollo's wing
I come ; receive in peace this hunted thing.
My sin no more polluteth, nor with hand
Unpurified before thy throne I stand.
A blunted edge, grief-worn and sanctified
By pain, where'er men traffic or abide,
On, on, o'er land and sea I have made my way,
True-purposed Loxias' bidding to obey.
At last I have found thy House ; thine image I
Clasp, and here wait thy judgement till I die.

[*He throws himself down at the feet of the Statue, but no answer comes. Presently enter the* FURIES, *following him.*

LEADER.

Ha ! Here he has passed. Spot reeketh upon spot.
Blood is a spy that points and babbles not.

Like hounds that follow some sore-wounded fawn,
We smell the way that blood and tears are gone,
And follow.—Oh, my belly gaspeth sore
With toils man-wasting; I can chase no more.
Through all the ways of the world I have shepherded
My lost sheep, and o'er many an ocean sped,
Wingless pursuing, swift as any sail.
And now 'tis here, meseemeth, he doth quail
And cower.—Aye, surely it is here; the smell
Of man's blood laughs to meet me; All is well.

FURIES (*searching*).

Ha, search, search again!
Seek for him far and wide.
Shall this man fly or hide
And the unatonèd stain
Of his mother's blood be vain?
Haha! Lo where he lies!
And comfort is in his eyes!
He hath made his arms a wreath
For the knees of the Deathless One,
And her judgement challengeth
On the deed his hands have done.
In vain! All in vain!
When blood on the earth is shed,
Blood of a mother dead,
Ye shall gather it not again.
'Tis wet, 'tis vanishèd,
Down in the dust like rain.
Thyself shalt yield instead,
Living, from every vein,
Thine own blood, rich and red,

For our parchèd mouths to drain,
Till my righteous heart be fed
With thy blood and thy bitter pain ;
Till I waste thee like the dead,
And cast thee among the slain,
Till her wrong be comforted
And her wound no longer stain.

The Law thou then shalt see ;
That whoso of men hath trod
In sin against these three,
Parent or Guest or God,
That sin is unforgot,
And the payment faileth not.
There liveth, for every man,
Below, in the realm of Night,
A judge who straighteneth
The crooked ; his name is Death.
All life his eye doth scan
And recordeth right.

ORESTES.

I have known much evil, and have learnt therein
What divers roads man goes to purge his sin,
And when to speak and when be dumb ; and eke
In this thing a wise master bids me speak.
The blood upon this hand is fallen asleep
And fades. And though a sin be ne'er so deep
'Twill age with the ageing years. When this of mine
Was fresh, on Phoebus' hearth with blood of swine
'Twas washed and blurred. 'Twere a long tale since then,
To tell how I have spoke with many men

In scathless parle. And now, with lips of grace,
Once more I pray the Lady of this place,
Athena, to mine aid. Let her but come ;
Myself, mine Argive people and my home
Shall without war be hers, hers true of heart
And changeless. Therefore, wheresoe'er thou art,
In some far wilderness of Libyan earth,
By those Tritonid waters of thy birth ;
Upgirt for deeds or veilèd on thy throne ;
Or is it Phlegra's field thou brood'st upon,
Guiding the tempest, like some Lord of War,
Oh, hear ! A goddess heareth though afar :
Bring me deliverance in this mine hour !

[*He waits expectant, but there is no answer.*

LEADER.

Not Lord Apollo's, not Athena's power
Shall reach thee any more. Forgot, forgot,
Thou reelest back to darkness, knowing not
Where in man's heart joy dwelleth ; without blood,
A shadow, flung to devils for their food !
Wilt answer not my word ? Wilt spurn thereat,
Thou that art mine, born, doomed, and consecrate
My living feast, at no high altar slain ?
Hark thou this song to bind thee like a chain !

FURIES (*as they move into position for the Dance*).

Up, let us tread the dance, and wind—
The hour is come !—our shuddering spell.
Show how this Band apportions well
Their fated burdens to mankind.

Behold, we are righteous utterly.
The man whose hand is clean, no wrath
From us shall follow : down his path
He goeth from all evil free.

But whoso slays and hides withal
His red hand, swift before his eyes
True witness for the dead we rise :
We are with him to the end of all.

[*Being now in position they begin the Binding Song.*

SOME FURIES. [*Strophe* 1

Mother, who didst bear a being
Dread to the eyeless and the seeing,
Night, my Mother !
Leto's Child would wrong me, tear
From my clutch this trembling hare,
My doomèd prey : he bore to slay,
And shall he not the cleansing bear,
He, none other ?

CHORUS.

But our sacrifice to bind,
Lo, the music that we wind,
How it dazeth and amazeth
And the will it maketh blind,
As it moves without a lyre
To the throb of my desire ;
'Tis a chain about the brain,
'Tis a wasting of mankind.

OTHER FURIES. [*Antistrophe* 1.

Thus hath Fate, through weal and woe,
For our Portion as we go

Spun the thread :
Whenso mortal man in sin
'Brueth hand against his kin,
Mine till death He wandereth,
And freedom never more shall win,
Not when dead.

CHORUS.

But our sacrifice to bind,
Lo, the music that we wind,
How it dazeth and amazeth
And the will it maketh blind,
As it moves without a lyre
To the throb of my desire ;
'Tis a chain about the brain,
'Tis a wasting of mankind.

SOME FURIES. [*Strophe* 2.

Since the hour we were begot
Of this rite am I the priest ;
Other gods may share it not ;
Nor is any man nor beast
That dare eat the food we eat
Nor among us take his seat ;
For no part have I nor lot
In the white robe and the feast.

CHORUS.

For the tale I make mine own
Is of houses overthrown,
When the Foe within the Dwelling
Slays a brother and is flown :

Up and after him, Io !
While the blood is still a-flow,
Though his strength be full and swelling,
We shall waste him, flesh from bone !

OTHER FURIES. [*Antistrophe* 2.

Would they take thee from the care
We have guarded thee withal ?
Would the Gods disown our prayer
Till no Law be left at all ?
Yea, because of blood that drips
As aforetime from our lips,
And the world's hate that we bear,
God hath cast us from His hall !

CHORUS.

I am on them as they fly,
With a voice out of the sky,
And my armèd heel is o'er them
To fall crashing from on high.
There be fliers far and fast,
But I trip them at the last,
And my arms are there before them,
And shall crush them ere they die !

DIVERS FURIES. [*Strophe* 3.

— The glories of Man that were proud where the sunlight came,
Below in the dark are wasted and cast to shame ;
For he trembles at the hearing
Of the Black Garments nearing,
And the beating of the feet, like flame.

[*Antistrophe* 3.

— He falls and knows not; the blow hath made
blind his eyes;
And above hangs Sin, as a darkening of the skies,
And a great voice swelling
Like a mist about his dwelling,
And sobbing in the mist and cries.

[*Strophe* 4.

— For so it abideth : subtle are we to plan,
Sure to fulfil, and forget not any Sin ;
And Venerable they call us, but none can win
Our pardon for child of man.
Unhonoured and undesired though our kingdom
be,
Where the sun is dead and no god in all the
skies,
Great crags and trackless, alike for them that see,
And them of the wasted eyes ;

[*Antistrophe* 4.

— What mortal man but quaketh before my power,
And boweth in worship to hear my rule of
doom,
God-given of old, fate-woven on the ageless
loom
And ripe to the perfect hour ?
To the end of all abideth mine ancient Right,
Whose word shall be never broke nor its
deed undone,
Though my seat is below the Grave, in the place
where sight
Fails and there is no Sun.

Enter ATHENA.

ATHENA.

Far off I heard the calling of my name,
Beside Scamander, where I took in claim
The new land which the Achaean lords and kings,
In royal spoil for many warfarings,
Gave, root and fruit for ever, as mine own
Exempted prize, to Theseus' sons alone.
Thence came I speeding, while behind me rolled
My wingless aegis, floating fold on fold.
But these strange visitants . . . I tremble not
Beholding, yet I marvel. Who and what
Are ye? I speak to all. And who is he
Who round mine image clings so desperately?
But ye are like no earth-seed ever sown,
No goddess-shape that Heaven hath looked upon,
Nor any semblance borne of human kind . . .
Howbeit, ye have not wronged me. I were blind
To right and custom did I speak you ill.

LEADER.

Virgin of God most high, have all thy will.
Still-weeping Night knows us the brood she bears;
The wronged ones in the darkness call us Prayers.

ATHENA.

I know your lineage and the names ye hold.

LEADER.

Our office and our lot can soon be told.

ATHENA.

Make clear thy word, that all be understood.

LEADER.

We hunt from home the shedder of man's blood

ATHENA.

What end appoint ye to that flight of his?

LEADER.

A land where none remembereth what joy is.

ATHENA.

And such a chase on this man thou wilt cry?

LEADER.

Who dared to be his mother's murderer, aye.

ATHENA.

What goaded him? Some fear, some unseen wrath?

LEADER.

What goad could drive a man on such a path?

ATHENA (*looking at* ORESTES).

Why speaketh one alone, when two are there?

LEADER.

He will not swear, nor challenge me to swear.

ATHENA.

Which wouldst thou, to seem righteous, or to be?

LEADER.

What meanst thou there? Speak out thy subtlety.

ATHENA.

Let no bare oath the deeper right subdue.

LEADER.

Try thou the cause, then, and give judgement true.

ATHENA.

Ye trust me this whole issue to decide?

LEADER.

Who would not trust thee? True thou art and tried.

ATHENA (*turning to* ORESTES).

Strange man, and what in turn hast thou to advance?
Thy land and lineage, and thy long mischance
Show first, then make thine answer to their laws.
If truly in the justice of thy cause
Trusting, thou clingest here in need so dire
To mine own shape, hard by my deathless fire,
In fearful prayer, as lost Ixîon prayed,
Make to all these thine answer unafraid.

ORESTES.

Most high Athena, let me from the last
Of these thy questionings one fear outcast.
Pollution is not in me, nor with hand
Blood-reeking cleave I to thine altar-strand;
In sign whereof, behold, I have cast away
That silence which the man of blood alway

Observeth, till some hand, that hath the power
To cleanse the sins of man, new blood shall shower
Of swine upon him, drowning the old stain.
I have been cleansed again and yet again
In others' dwellings, both by blood that fell
And running rivers that have washed me well.
Be that care then forgot. My name and birth
Are quickly told. I am sprung of Argive earth ;
My father's name was known upon thy lips,
Agamemnon, marshal of a thousand ships,
With whom thou madest Troy, that city of pride,
No more a city. He returning died,
Not kingly. 'Twas my mother black of heart
Met him and murdered, snaring him with art
Of spangled webs. . . . Alas, that robe of wrath,
That cried to heaven the blood-stain of the bath !
Then came long exile ; then, returning, I
Struck dead my mother. Nought will I deny ;
So, for my sire belovèd, death met death.
And Loxias in these doings meriteth
His portion, who foretold strange agonies
To spur me if I left unsmitten these
That slew him. . . . Take me thou, and judge if ill
I wrought or righteously. I will be still
And praise thy judgement, whatsoe'er betide.

ATHENA.

This is a mystery graver to decide
Than mortal dreameth. Nor for me 'twere good
To sift the passionate punishments of blood.
Since thou hast cast thee on my altar stair
Perfect by suffering, from thy stains that were

Made clean and harmless, suppliant at my knee,
I, in my City's name, must pity thee
And chide not. Yet these too, I may not slight:
They have their portion in the orb of Right
Eternal. If they are baffled of their will,
The wrath of undone Justice shall distil
Through all the air a poison; yea, a pall
Intolerable about the land shall fall
And groaning sickness. Doubtful thus it lies:
To cast them out or keep them in mine eyes
Were equal peril, and I must ponder sore.
Yet, seeing fate lays this matter at my door,
Myself not judging, I will judges find
In mine own City, who will make no blind
Oath-challenge to pursuer and pursued,
But follow this new rule, by me indued
As law for ever. Proofs and witnesses
Call ye on either side, and set to these
Your oaths. Such oath helps Justice in her need.
I will go choose the noblest of the breed
Of Athens, and here bring them to decide
This bloody judgement even as truth is tried,
And then, their oath accomplished, to depart,
Right done, and no transgression in their heart.

[*Exit* ATHENA. *The Shrine is closed,* ORESTES *remaining inside at the foot of the Image*

FURIES. [*Strophe* 1.

— This day there is a new Order born.
If this long coil of judging and of strife
Shall uplift the mother-murderer to life,

Shall the World not mark it, and in scorn
Go forth to do evil with a smile?
Yea, for parents hereafter there is guile
That waiteth, and great anguish; by a knife
In a child's hand their bosom shall be torn.

[*Antistrophe* 1.

— No wrath shall be stirred by any deed,
No doom from the Dark Watchers any more.
Lo, to all death I cast wide the door!
And men, while they whisper of the need
Of their neighbour, shall pray tremblingly within
For some rest and diminishing of sin.
They will praise the old medicine that of yore
Brought comfort, and marvel as they bleed.

— Vainly will they make their moan! [*Strophe* 2
Vainly cry in sore despite,
"Help, ye Watchers on your throne,
Help, O Right!"
Many a father so shall cry,
Many a mother, new in pain;
Their vain sobbing floateth by:
"The great House is fallen again!
Law shall die!"

— Times there be when Fear is good, [*Antistrophe* 2.
And the Watcher in the breast
Needs must reign in masterhood.
Aye, 'tis best
Through much straitening to be wise.
Who that hath no fear at all
In the sunlight of his eyes,
Man or City, but shall fall
From Right somewise?

[*Strophe* 3.

— The life that walketh without rule,
The life that is a tyrant's fool,
Thou shalt not praise.
O'er all man's striving variously
God looketh, but, where'er it be,
Gives to the Mean his victory.
And therefore know I and confess,
The doomèd child of Godlessness
Is Pride of Man, and Pride's excess ;
Only from health of heart shall spring
What men desire, what poets sing,
Stormless days.

[*Antistrophe* 3.

— Whate'er befall, the Throne of Right
Fear thou, and let no lucre bright
Seen suddenly,
To spurn that Altar make thee blind ;
For chastisement is hid behind,
And the End waiteth, and shall bind.
Wherefore I charge thee, through all stress
Thy mother and thy father bless :
Herein, O Man, lies holiness.
And next, of all within thy fold,
The stranger and the friendless hold
In sanctity.

[*Strophe* 4.

— He that is righteous uncompelled and free
His life's way taketh
Not without happiness ; and utterly
Cast to destruction shall he never be.
But he who laugheth and is bold in sin,
From every port great gain he gathers in,

Rejoicing ; but methinks shall cast away
All, with much haste and trembling, on the day
When sails are stript by the edge of wind and sea
And yard-arm breaketh.

[*Antistrophe* 4.

He yearns, he strives, amid the whirling sea,
But none shall hear ;
And loud his Daemon laughs, saying " This is he
Who vaunted him these things should never be ! "
Who now is weeping, weak in the endless foam,
And sees the foreland where beyond is home,
But shall not pass it : on the rocks of Right
Wrecked is his life's long glory ; and the night
Falls, and there lives from all his agony
No word nor tear.

The scene is now set with seats for the Council of the Areopagus. Enter ATHENA, *the* JUDGES, *a* HERALD, *a crowd of* CITIZENS, *the* FURIES, ORESTES.

ATHENA.

Herald, thine office ! See that yonder crowds
Hold back, and let this piercer of the clouds,
Filled with man's breath, the Tuscan trumpet, blow
His fiery summons to the host below.
Then all be silence, while the people fill
This Council Hall. Thus shall my sovran will
And ordinance to this people, great and small,
Be known for ever, and upheld by all
Within our gates ; and thus my wardens do
Justice this day, discerning false from true.

Enter APOLLO.

LEADER.

Apollo, thou ? Go, reign where thou art king !
What portion hast thou in this doom-saying ?

APOLLO.

I come to bear my witness. This is one
Who in great anguish came to me alone
For refuge, and knelt suppliant at my shrine.
Therefore the cleansing of his stain is mine.
Likewise I share his plea, and on me take
What guilt he bears for that dead mother's sake.
Ope thou the court, O Pallas, and, as well
Thou canst, establish justice durable.

ATHENA.

Ho ! Opened is the Court ; and yours the speech.
(*To the* FURIES)
He who pursueth, speaking first, can teach
Best his whole grief, and how the evil grew.

LEADER.

Many are we, yet shall our words be few.
Make answer thou, point against point. And say
First this one thing : thy mother didst thou slay ?

ORESTES.

I slew her. . . . Aye. Denied it cannot be.

LEADER.

Aha! The first of the three bouts to me!

ORESTES.

Too soon ye vaunt. I am not yet outsped.

LEADER.

How didst thou slay? That also must be said.

ORESTES (*with an effort*).

I will say it. I drew sword and clave her throat.

LEADER.

Who led thee to the deed? Whose word and plot?

ORESTES.

He who is with me now, and witnesseth.

LEADER.

God's prophet bade thee plot thy mother's death?

ORESTES.

Yes: and hath never failed me to this day.

LEADER.

Not yet? . . . After the vote, what wilt thou say?

ORESTES.

I fear not. Aidance from my father's grave . . .

LEADER.

Go, mother-murderer ! Call the dead to save !

ORESTES.

Two stains of death lay mingled on her hand.

LEADER.

How two ? Let these who judge thee understand.

ORESTES.

A husband and a father, both, she slew.

LEADER.

And death hath purged her. Shalt not thou die too ?

ORESTES.

Ye never hunted her, for all her stain.

LEADER.

'Twas not one blood in slayer and in slain.

ORESTES.

And are my mother's blood and my blood one ?

LEADER.

How did she feed thee else beneath her zone ?
Caitiff ! Thy mother's blood wilt thou deny ?

ORESTES (*overcome*).

I can no more. . . . Give witness, and reply,
Lord Phoebus, in my stead, if righteously
I slew. . . . I slew : denied it cannot be :
But rightly, or most foully—as thine own
Heart speaks, give judgement, and let all be known

APOLLO.

Ye judges of Athena's Court most high,
I come to speak before you faithfully,
Being God's prophet : therefore truth is mine.
Nor ever spake I from my throne divine
Of man nor woman, land nor city wall,
Save by command of Him who ruleth all,
Zeus, the Olympian Father. Is there Right
Holier than this, I charge ye think, or Might
More mighty ? Follow ye the All-father's will :
If oaths be strong, is Zeus not stronger still ?

LEADER.

'Twas Zeus, thou tellest, laid this duty large
Upon thy lips ? 'Twas Zeus who bade thee charge
This man to avenge his father and cast down,
As nothing worth, his mother's sacred crown ?

APOLLO.

Are these the same ? That a great man, raised high
By royal sceptre, given of God, should die,
And die by a woman's hand—and not in war
By Amazonian arrow, sped from far, . . .

But—Hear my tale, O Pallas, and ye too
Who sit enthronèd to sift false from true ;
He came from battle after sufferings sore
But greater glories, and she stood before
The gate to greet and praise him, strewed his path
With crimson robes and led him to his bath—
A marble bed !—and o'er the end thereof
Laid the great web and curtained it above,
To ensnare him as he rose ; then, in the wide
Unending folds, she smote him and he died !
So died a man, ye hear it from my lips,
All-honoured, War-Lord of a thousand ships ;
And such a wife was she ! Be stern, and smite
The guilty, ye who sit to establish right !

LEADER.

Doth Zeus count fatherhood so high a thing ?
Who cast in bonds his father and his king,
Old Cronos ? Are these things not contrary ?
I charge ye, judges, hearken his reply.

APOLLO

Ye worms of hate, O ye that Gods abhor,
Bonds can be loosened ; there is cure therefor,
And many and many a plan in God's great mind
To free the prisoners whom he erst did bind.
But once the dust hath drunk the blood of men
Murdered, there is no gathering it again.
For that no magic doth my Father know,
Though all things else he changeth high and low
Or fixeth, and no toil is in his breath

LEADER.

Is that thy pleading against this man's death ?
The kindred blood, his mother's blood, the well
Of his own life, he hath spilt. How shall he dwell
In Argos ? In his home ? What altar-stair,
When Argos worships, will receive his prayer ?
What love-bowl of the brethren cleanse his hand ?

APOLLO.

That too I answer ; mark and understand.
The mother to the child that men call hers
Is no true life-begetter, but a nurse
Of live seed. 'Tis the sower of the seed
Alone begetteth. Woman comes at need,
A stranger, to hold safe in trust and love
That bud of new life—save when God above
Wills that it die. And would ye proof of this,
There have been fathers where no mother is.
Whereof a perfect witness standeth nigh,
Athena Pallas, child of the Most High,
A thought-begotten unconceivèd bloom,
No nursling of the darkness of the womb,
But such a flower of life as goddess ne'er
Hath borne in heaven nor ever more shall bear.
Pallas, in all things it is mine to swell
In power thy people and thy citadel ;
And therefore to thine Altar did I send
This suppliant, that hereafter to the end
Of mortal time he may be true to thee,
Planting his spear by thine unfalteringly,
And on through generations yet unborn
Argos observe the pact her King hath sworn.

ATHENA.

Now shall I charge upon their faith these men
To cast true stones, or would ye speak again?

LEADER.

Shot is our every arrow: I but stay
To learn how ends the issue of the day.

ATHENA.

How shall I cast a judgement in this cause
Unblamed of you, and of the eternal laws?

APOLLO.

Ye have heard what ye have heard. Strangers, revere
Your oaths, and cast your judgement without fear.

ATHENA.

Hear now mine ordinance, ye who have striven
This day to give, what none before hath given,
True judgement o'er spilt blood. O Attic Folk,
Henceforth for ever, under Aigeus' yoke,
This Council and this Judgement Seat by me
Are stablisht. On this mountain shall it be,
Here in the Amazons' most virgin hold,
Who came in wrath for Theseus' wrongs of old
Embattled, and this fortress against ours,
Hill against hill, towers against soaring towers,
Built, and to Ares on the rock with flame
Gave sacrifice: whence comes its awful name,
The Rock, the Mount, of Ares. All things here
Being holy, Reverence and her sister, Fear,

In darkness as in daylight shall restrain
From all unrighteousness the sons of men,
While Athens' self corrupt not her own law.
With mire and evil influx ye can flaw
Fair water till no lips may drink thereof.
I charge you, citizens, enfold and love
That spirit that nor anarch is nor thrall;
And casting away Fear, yet cast not all;
For who that hath no fear is safe from sin?
That Fear which is both Ruth and Law within
Be yours, and round your city and your land
Shall be upraised a rampart, yea, a hand
Of strong deliverance, which no sons of men,
From the Isle of Pelops to the Scythian fen,
Possess nor know, this Council of the Right,
Untouched of lucre, terrible to smite,
And swift and merciful, a guard to keep
Vigil above my people while they sleep,
Which here I establish. Let these words advise
My city evermore.—I charge you, rise
And lift your stones of doom and judge, alway
Your oath remembering. I have said my say.

[*The* JUDGES *rise and go one by one past the two urns, casting their stones as they pass*

LEADER.

Behold, an awful presence moveth yet
Within your land, which mock not nor forget!

APOLLO.

The will of Zeus, by my lips ministered,
I charge you make not fruitless nor unfeared!

LEADER.

And what wouldst thou with blood, having therein
No place? Henceforth thine altars are unclean!

APOLLO.

Did Zeus, then, sin, who bowed his head to spare
Blood-red Ixîon for his burning prayer?

LEADER.

Thou speakest: but my Law, if it be broke,
Shall come again in wrath to haunt this folk.

APOLLO.

Thou hast no honour more 'mid things divine,
Or old or new: the victory shall be mine.

LEADER.

So in Admêtus' House thou didst betray
The Fates, to make man deathless past his day.

APOLLO.

Shall not a god regard his worshipper
Then chiefliest, when in peril and in prayer?

LEADER.

The ancient boundaries thou didst desecrate,
Thou mad'st a drunkard of Eternal Fate!

APOLLO.

True Justice thou canst know not. Thou shalt spue
Thy venom forth, and none give heed thereto.

LEADER.

Women are we, and old ; and thou dost ride
Above us, trampling, in thy youth and pride.
Howbeit, I wait to know the end, being still
In doubt to work this City good or ill.

ATHENA.

One judgement still remains. I, at the last,
To set Orestes free this stone will cast :
For, lo, no mother bare me : I approve
In all—save only that I know not love—
The man's way. Flesh and spirit I am His
Who gave me life. And in this coil it is
No dire deed that a woman, who had slain
Her mate and house-lord, should be quelled again.
Wherefore I judge that here, if equal be
The votes ye cast, Orestes shall go free.
Ye judges, haste : on you this office turns :
And cast the gathered sea-stones from the urns.

ORESTES.

Apollo, Lord, what shall the issue be?

LEADER.

O Night, O dark-eyed Mother, dost thou see?

ORESTES.

Is it the noose of death, or life and light?

LEADER.

My law down-trodden or enthroned in right

APOLLO.

Divide the fallen sea-stones as is due,
Strangers, and in the count see all be true.
One absent voice may make life ruinous,
And one cast pebble build a fallen house.

[*The scrutineers bring their results to* ATHENA.

ATHENA.

This prisoner, since the stones for ill and good
Are equal, hath escaped the doom of blood

ORESTES.

O Pallas, O deliverer of my race,
Thou hast led back the wanderer to his place,
The homeless to his home ; and men shall say,
" Once more he is an Argive, and this day
Dwells in his father's riches, by the word
Of Pallas, Loxias, and Zeus the Third,
Who saveth all and all accomplisheth."
'Twas He of old who saw my father's death,
And pitied ; He who saw pursuing me
My mother's ministers, and set me free.
Pallas, to this thy people and thy clime
Through all the long years of ensuing Time
I swear, ere I depart to mine own land,
This oath. No captain of an Argive band
Shall ever against Athens raise his spear.
Yea, and if any break this law, I swear
Myself, out of the grave, bewilderment
Shall set before their host, and discontent,
Disheartened roads and rivers evil-starred,
Till back they turn, bowed down by toils too hard

For bearing. But if still with vow unbroke,
Through storm or shine, for Pallas and her folk
Their lance is lifted, then to Argos too
My love shall be the greater, and hold true.
Farewell, O Pallas; fare you also well,
All that within her ancient rampart dwell;
Iron may your grasp against all evil be,
And strong to save, and big with victory!

[*Exit* Orestes.

Furies.

Woe on you, woe, ye younger gods!
Ye have trampled the great Laws of old
Beneath your chariots! Ye have broke the rods
Of justice, yea and torn them from my hold!
Mine office gone, unhappy and angered sore,
I rage alone. What have I any more
To do? Or be? Shall not mine injury turn
And crush this people? Shall not poison rain
Upon them, even the poison of this pain
Wherewith my heart doth burn?
And up therefrom there shall a lichen creep,
A leafless, childless blight,
A stain in the earth man-slaying. . . . O just
Throne of Right!
Have ye not suffered deep,
Deep, ye unhappy children of old Night,
Born to be scorned and weep!

Athena.

I pray you, nay! Make not this bitter moan;
Ye are not conquered. Equal, stone for stone,

The judgement fell, in honesty of thought,
Not scorn of thee. From Zeus on high was brought
A shining witness ; and the god, who gave
The word to slay, himself was here to save,
Lest this man for obedience to his will
Should perish. . . . And for this ye fain would spill
Your poison ? Ah, take thought ! Nor on our heads
Rain the strange dew a spirit's anger sheds,
Seed-ravening blight and mildews merciless,
Till all the land lie waste in fruitlessness.
Spare us, and, lo, I promise : here shall be
A home your own, a caverned mystery,
Where alway ye shall sit, enthroned in pride
And shining, by my people glorified.

FURIES.

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Throne of Right !
Have ye not suffered deep,
Deep, ye unhappy children of old Night,
Born to be scorned and weep !

ATHENA.

Ah, rage not. No dishonour comes you nigh ;
Nor, being immortal, blast for these who die
Their little life and land. I, even as you,
Obey the supreme Father, yea, I too.
What boots it to say more ? To me alone
The keys of that great treasure-house are known
Where sleep the lightnings.—But He needs them not !
Accept my word, and cast not here the hot
Fruits of a passion that turns all to ill :
Bid the dark tempest's bitter surge be still,
Thou great in glory, partner of my home !
From many miles of land to thee shall come
First-fruits for maidens wed, for children born ;
Then shall ye bless this peace that we have sworn.

FURIES.

That this should fall on me,
Me of the ancient way,
The faithful of heart! To be
Unclean, abominable,
In darkness where I dwell,
And mine honour shorn away!
My breath is as a fire flung far and wide,
And a strange anguish stabbeth at my side.
Hear thou my wrath, O Mother, Night, mine own,
Hear what these young false-handed gods have wrought!
Mine immemorial honour is o'erthrown,
And I am naught!

ATHENA.

Thine heaviness myself will help thee bear.
Older thou art than I, and surely ware
Of wisdom that I wot not : yet also
To me Zeus giveth both to think and know.
And if ye leave us for the stranger's shore,
This know I, that your heart shall still be sore
For Athens. Time's great river in its flow
From darkness shall but make her glory grow.
And here in honour at Erechtheus' side
Enthronèd, thou shalt garner gifts of pride
From men and women worshippers, in fair
Procession moving, richer and more rare
Than eye of man hath seen in other lands.
Such offering now awaits thee at my hands :
Blessing and blest, 'mid glories gladly given,
To share this land, the best beloved of Heaven.

FURIES.

That this should fall on me,
Me of the ancient way,
The faithful of heart! To be
Unclean, abominable,
In darkness where I dwell,
And mine honour shorn away!
My breath is as a fire flung far and wide,
And a strange anguish stabbeth at my side.
Hear thou my wrath, O Mother, Night, mine own,
Hear what these young false-handed gods have wrought!
Mine immemorial honour is o'erthrown,
And I am naught!

ATHENA.

I will not cease thine anger to assuage
With good words. None shall say that, in thine age,
By younger gods and city-building men
Thou and thy law were mocked, cast out again
To walk the wilderness, exiles from hence.
If thou canst hold that spirit in reverence
Which hears Persuasion and which thinks again,
Whose understanding and whose peace doth reign
By God's appointment in my word and thought,
Here thou wilt stay. Or, if that please thee not,
Thou shalt not justly lay upon this land
Or wrath, or vengeance, or afflicting hand.
Stay, if ye will. Let this soil be your own
With Right made perfect and an ageless throne.

LEADER.

Great Pallas, what abode shall be my lot?

ATHENA.

A throne unwashed by tears; reject it not.

LEADER.

Say I consent; what shall mine office be?

ATHENA.

No house shall prosper save by aid of thee.

LEADER.

Such greatness mine! Wilt thou thereof have care?

ATHENA.

Yea ; and through life uphold thy worshipper.

LEADER.

For dateless time thou giv'st me warranty ?

ATHENA.

The thing I speak shall never cease to be.

LEADER.

Thou wilt soften me. . . . Methinks mine anger bends.

ATHENA.

Stay, and that softened mood will find thee friends.

LEADER.

What spell upon the land wouldst have me lay ?

ATHENA.

All that brings Victory and not Dismay.
From earth and dewy sea—be this thy prayer—
From moving winds and the still dome of air
Let breaths of gladness and sweet sunlight come ;
The fruit of flocks and fields round every home
Abundant flow and, year by year, be true.
The seeds of human life make fruitful, too,
Save in the ungodly : them thy Rule of Right
Shall cast out, as of old. For I delight,

Like one that tends his garden, to uprear
These plants of righteousness, untouched by fear
Of evil. Cast not on this soil of mine
Thy whet-stones of the blood, like poisonous wine
In young men's hearts, till rage and death be stirred.
Oh, take not from the fierce mate-murdering bird
The heart to give my people, the blind war
Within, that burneth most where brethren are.
War with the stranger, yes ; no stint thereof ;
Terror is there, and glory, and great love ;
But not the mad bird-rage that slays at home.
Such let thine office be. And if there come
True-hearted war, I will not fail to uphold
This land victorious where great deeds are told.

[*At a sign from the* LEADER, *the* FURIES *take formation for a Song of Blessing.*

FURIES.

A home with Pallas shall be mine.
I will not give this City nay,
The Fort of Heaven, which Zeus divine
And faithful Ares hold in sway,
A shining loveliness to enfold
The altars of the gods of old.

For whom—so do I weave my prayer
And move with words of presage good—
All fortunes whereby life is fair,
Like springing fountains, up shall flood,
From Earth's deep-bosomed caverns won
By wooing of the enthronèd Sun.

ATHENA.

I love my City ; and with plan
Aforethought here have welcomed these,
The Awarders great and hard to appease,
Whose realm is all the estate of man.

Justice is theirs : though many an one
May meet their wrath in innocence,
Not knowing why the wound nor whence,
That striketh. Some great evil done

Aforetime, with no payment just,
Casts him to These. Strange wrath and hate
Are round him, and he cries : but Fate,
Unanswering, grindeth him to dust.

FURIES.

No storm-wind—so I speak my prize—
Shall breathe the blight that poisoneth trees ;
No burning things that blind the eyes
Of plants, shall pass her boundaries :
The groaning pest shall come not nigh,
Nor fruit upon the branches die.

The flocks shall browse in happy cheer,
And Pan, the Shepherd, guard them true,
With twofold increase, as the year
Repays her seeds in season due ;
And deep-hid treasures of the ground
Shall be in God's due order found.

ATHENA.

Ye Guardians, hear the word she hath said.
And shall fulfill ! Most potent hands
Hath great Erînys, in the lands
Where dwell the deathless and the dead.

And all this world of men declares
Her working upon right and wrong;
How one man's life she makes a song,
Another's a long mist of tears.

FURIES.

Let manhood's glory by no doom
Of death untimely be defiled ;
Let life to maidens in their bloom
Bring each a lover and a child.
O whatsoever Gods have power,
And Fates eternal, grant this dower !

Ye Fates, our Mother's Sisterhood,
Assigners true to all that be,
To every house its ill and good,
To every hour its potency ;
Righteous participants through all,
Of Gods the most majestical.

ATHENA.

With joy I hear their prescient song
Touching my land ; and much in pride
I praise Persuasion gentle-eyed,
Who guarded well my lips and tongue,

When these were wrathful and denied ;
  But Zeus, whose Word is in the Mart,
  Prevailed ; and of our strife no part,
Save strife in blessing, shall abide.

FURIES.

Let her who hungereth still for wrong,
  Faction, in Athens ne'er again
Lift on the air her ravening song ;
  Let not the dust of Pallas' Plain
Drink the dark blood of any son
By fury of revenge fordone.

Rage not to smite the smiter, lest
  By rage the City's heart be torn :
Bless him that blesseth : in each breast
  So shall a single love be born,
And 'gainst Her foes a single hate.
This also maketh firm a state.

ATHENA.

Wise are they and have found the way
  Of peace. And in each awful face
  I see for you, my People, grace :
If ye are gentle, even as they,

And do them worship, this shall be
  Your work : to guide through ill, through good,
  Both land and town in that pure mood
Of truth that shuns iniquity.

[*The* JUDGES *and the concourse of* ATHENIANS *have now formed into procession, to escort the* FURIES *to their Cavern.*

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS.

Rejoice, rejoice! And as ye go your ways
In rich apportionment of blissful days,
Farewell, farewell!

FURIES.

Ye folk within the wall, approved
To neighbour Jove's eternal eyes,
Ye lovers of the Well-beloved,
The Virgin Spirit, timely wise,
The wings of Pallas fold above you,
Therefore shall Zeus the Father love you.

ATHENA.

Fare ye well also. I must go
Before you, guiding, to make bright
Your secret chambers with the light,
The holy light, they dared not know.

Come, and when deep beneath the veil
Of earth ye pass, 'mid offering high,
Hold down the evil that shall die,
Send up the good that shall prevail.

Ye sons of Cranaos, guide them, till
These Wanderers rest within your doors:
With them one City now is yours;
Be one in working and in will!

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS.

Rejoice, rejoice! I raise my voice again,
To speak that bliss that overtowereth pain
Farewell, farewell!

FURIES.

All things within the Wall that dwell,
All gods and men, that are or were;
All life from Pallas' citadel
Which draws its being, I am here:
These Dwellers in your gates adore,
And fear the tides of Life no more!

ATHENA.

The prayers they have uttered o'er my land I praise;
And speed them on, 'mid many a torch's blaze,
To that most deep and subterranean end
Of wandering. Let these ministers, who tend
Mine image, follow; righteous warders they.
Let all the fullness of the land this day,
Children, and wives and women bent with years,
Come forth: do worship to these Wanderers
Accepted in their robes of crimson dye.
Let leap the flash of fire. This great Ally
Shall be revealed and proven in the fate
Of Athens, if her men be true and great.

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS.

Gather ye home; are ye great, do ye crave adoration,
O childless Children of Night in the pride of your going?
(Give good words, O Folk of the Fold!)
Aeonian caverns of glory are yours, and oblation
Of worship, and sacrifice high, and praise overflowing.
(Give good words, O young men and old!)

Come with the Law that can pardon, the Judgement
that knoweth,
O Semnai, Semnai, watchers o'er people and land;
And joy be a-stream in your ways, as the fire that
bloweth
A-stream from beacon and brand.

[*A cry of joy rises above the singing.*

Outpour ye the Chalice of Peace where the torches
are blending:
In Pallas the place it is found and the task it is done.
The Law that is Fate and the Father the All-Com-
prehending
Are here met together as one.

[*Again a cry of joy as the Procession passes out
of sight.*

NOTES

THE Scene is conceived as different in different parts of the play, but probably no actual change was made. A stage with the usual "House" background, representing a Temple or Castle, with a round orchestra (dancing floor) on a lower level in front, will suit all the needs of the action. A statue of Athena in place of the Omphalos Altar will turn the "House" from the Temple of Apollo at Delphi to that of Athena in Athens. A semicircle of seats, or something similar, will symbolize the Areopagus. Compare the change of scene in the Choëphoroe, where Agamemnon's Grave seems to be in the centre of the orchestra while the "House" represents the palace of Aigisthos, and the action of the play is now at one, now at the other.

P. 203, l. 1. The priestess first praises the Holders of the Throne of prophecy at Delphi—Earth, Themis, Phoebe, Apollo; then the other divine beings in the neighbourhood, including the River Pleistos, and ending suitably with Zeus the Perfecter or Accomplisher (*Teleios*). The ordinary legend told of Apollo's battle with a dragon, born of Earth, and the anger of Earth thereafter; Aeschylus insists that there was never any strife among the gods at Delphi.

P. 203, l. 9. Apollo was at Delos, his rocky isle with the "orbèd mere" in it, when he heard of the

gift made to him, and set off to take possession of Delphi.

P. 204, l. 19. Literally : " Loxias is the forth-shower (*prophêtês*) of Zeus the Father " : Loxias is the special title of Phoebus Apollo as prophet : the line is important for the understanding of the play.

P. 204, l. 24. Bromios and Pentheus : the story is given in the *Bacchae* of Euripides.

P. 205, l. 40. " Blood on his hand, etc. " : as if he had come straight from the murder. To inquire why the blood is still wet, and to explain that it is only the blood of swine killed in purification (ll. 284, 450), is to treat the matter too realistically.

P. 205, ll. 47 ff. This account prepares the audience for the appearance of the Erînyes, who had apparently not been represented on the stage before. They are not exactly like the Gorgons, nor yet like the winged Harpies who swept away Phineus' food.

P. 205, l. 64. Stage Direction. We do not know how the inner shrine was shown, whether by wide doors or by the drawing of a curtain.

P. 206, l. 71. " Born for wickedness and sorrow " : i.e. they exist for the punishment of sin, and nothing else. But see Introduction, p. 22 f.

P. 206, l. 79. The City of Pallas is Athens, her Rock the Acropolis.

P. 206, l. 90. Hermes : he is not present, but is invoked as the regular Guide of the Wanderer " Zeus pitieth," etc. : this is the essential doctrine of the play.

P. 207, ll. 94 ff. The Ghost. The Ghost is a Dream, and vanishes as the Furies wake. This does not mean that to an ancient poet the Ghost was unreal, but that a Dream was real. In the *Iliad* (Book II, 6 ff.) the Dream behaves like any other messenger of Zeus.

P. 208, l. 140. Leader of Furies. Homer speaks indifferently of "the Erînys" (singular) and "the Erînyes" (plural). Greek theology felt the difference between singular and plural far less than we do.

The Furies argue that Apollo has (1) broken the Law by stealing his favourite away from justice, and (2) defiled his own altar by bringing thither a man polluted with blood.

P. 210, l. 179. Apollo speaks here, not as "forthshower of Zeus," but in his own person as a Hellenic God, hating this lust for punishment which the Furies show: if torture is what they want, let them go to Persia and the lands of the barbarians, where they can get it, but keep away from Hellas and Delphi.

P. 212, l. 206. "And revilest us who guide his feet?" A quibble, which Apollo answers by another.

P. 212, l. 212. "'Twas not one blood": It is the Furies who first raise this sophism about the "common blood." In reality such a plea on behalf of a wife who had murdered her husband would no more be admitted in ancient law than in modern. But the Erînyes are supposed by the poet to represent (1) the primitive "matriarchal" society which preceded the introduction of marriage and civic life, and (2) a blind law based on purely physical considerations: hence Apollo's answer: "Your insistence on the physical blood-tie destroys all moral values. It is love and trust, not mere blood, that matters." He has also a physiological argument with which to meet their quibble in the trial scene (p. 235, l. 660).

P. 213, l. 229. "Thou hast thy greatness by the Throne of God": i.e. You have a Portion of your own, which you value as we value ours.

P. 214, ll. 235 ff. Orestes has been hunted over the face of the world for years and has at last made his way, bleeding, to Athena's Image in Athens.

The Furies are only a short way behind, tracking him by the blood.

The question has been raised what Image of Athena this is, and whether the scene is on the Acropolis or the Areopagus, or elsewhere. To ask such a question is to press too hard the ideal geography of ancient poetry. The scene is Athens, though sometimes we may have to think of one part of Athens rather than another. Similarly, in the *Helena* the scene is Egypt, though we are sometimes on the banks of the Nile, sometimes on the seashore, sometimes at the Isle of Pharos ; so in the *Agamemnon* the beacon from Troy to Argos starts from Mount Ida. The real Mount Ida was about thirty miles in the wrong direction, but the ideal Ida was simply the mountain of Troy.

P. 216, l. 270. "Parent or guest or god" : These are the three classes of persons towards whom primitive man has duties : (1) the gods ; (2) the kindred, in which the parents take the chief place ; (3) those aliens to whom he had specially bound himself by the tie of hospitality.

P. 216, l. 276. Orestes calls Athena to come to his aid, and explains that his touch does not defile her Image, and that he is at liberty to speak.—The reasons are : first, it is so long ago and he has suffered so much. Even such a defilement as his does not last for ever. Secondly, he was fully purified at Delphi in the regular way, new blood (of swine) being poured upon him to cover the old blood, and then both washed off together. Thirdly, he has, as a matter of fact, spoken to many people with no bad results to them.—It looks as if there was some ceremonial difficulty which Aeschylus had to meet, in making the unacquitted murderer embrace the Image of Athena or the Altar at Delphi.

P. 217, ll. 293, 295. According to one legend,

the epithet "Tritonia," traditionally applied to Athena, meant that she was born at Lake Tritonis in Libya. Phlegra was the scene of the Battle between the Gods and Giants; it is interesting that Aeschylus seems to conceive it as a continuous battle, not an incident in the past.

P. 217, l. 299. Orestes' prayer is followed by silence; a pause and no answer. Then the triumphant cry of the Fury, and the Binding Song to fix his despair. Then at l. 397, when hope had failed, Athena's entrance.

Pp. 218–21, ll. 321–396. This song falls into two parts: a solemn and even philosophical statement of the place of the Avengers in the Cosmos, and a magical chorus or "Binding Song," sinister and terrifying. "Binding charms" or *Defixiones* play a prominent part in ancient magic, and are sufficiently numerous to have a special volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum* to themselves.

The Furies here explain that their business is to punish sin: they have no other function, and therefore are repugnant to the Gods—much as a hangman or a mediaeval torturer is, or was, repellent to ordinary society. Unjustly, since he was only doing his appointed duty.

P. 219, l. 356. The Foe within the Dwelling. A murderer is one who behaves like the enemy inside his own household.

P. 222, l. 400. Athena comes from Sigêum in the neighbourhood of Troy, which in the time of Aeschylus had long been part of the Athenian Empire. Tradition said that it had been given by the Greek army to the "Sons of Theseus" (the Athenians) for their services in the Trojan War.

P. 222, ll. 404 f. In the MS. two alternative lines are given, one to be used if Athena entered

flying *ex machina* through the air, the other if it was more convenient for her to enter on a chariot. I have chosen the first. (The other may be translated:

Thence came I speeding, these young steeds of war
Impetuous yoked beneath my fiery car.)

Pp. 222–24, ll. 415–435. The dialogue between Athena and the Furies is significant. They state their position impressively: to ordinary gods and mortals they are abominable, but Night loves them and "the wronged ones in the darkness" see in them their prayers personified. On the other hand, Athena's question in l. 426, "What motive had he?" is just what they cannot answer or consider. "He has sinned; smite him," is the whole of their doctrine.

This explains the point about the oath. The Furies follow the old ordeal by oath: the only trial permitted to the accused man is that both parties can be made to swear. If the accused can swear that he did not commit the crime, well and good. If he cannot, he is guilty. This leaves out of account any inquiry into justification or extenuating circumstances or even intention. Hence Athena condemns it, and eventually substitutes a trial by free inquiry into the whole of the facts.

P. 225, ll. 470 ff. "A mystery graver to decide
Than mortal dreameth." Because it involves the whole problem of forgiveness. To reject the suppliant who has tried his best to do right is an offence; yet to save a particular sinner from the due consequence of his sin is an offence too. If one guilty man is to go unpunished, what remains of the Law? Athena decides to found a tribunal to inquire into the whole case and decide as it may think just, and this is the origin of the famous Court of the Areopagus. The Furies, as soon as they hear of this new-fangled

form of trial, are bewildered and begin to feel that they have been deceived. Their simple rule, that the doer shall suffer, is no longer holding good.

Pp. 226–29, ll. 490–565. The above leads on to the main argument of this fine lyric. "Spare the criminal, and the law is broken; and then there will be no protection for the helpless and innocent. Society cannot do without Fear, though of course it must be the Fear of Law. The righteous and law-fearing man may suffer, but is never utterly lost; the law-breaker may succeed for a time, but in the end he is destroyed."

Pp. 229 ff., ll. 566–777. The Trial Scene, though curious, is perhaps below the level of the rest of the play. For one thing, I think it is deliberately set, like the play scene in *Hamlet*, one remove further from reality. As the play in general is to real life, so is the Trial Scene to the play. Further, the acquittal of Orestes does not depend on the arguments used in the trial, but on the Will of Zeus, which is an ultimate fact not dependent on argument. The interest lies in the foundation of the Court of the Areopagus, as a tribunal superseding the blood-feud, the ordeal by oath, and all the rigid and unreasoning practices of primitive justice, by a justice which can understand and therefore sympathize.

The arguments run roughly as follows :—

PROSECUTION.

Did the prisoner kill his mother? He admits it. He must die.

DEFENCE.

Apollo ordered him to kill, because she had killed her husband.—Why did you not pursue her?

PROSECUTION.

A husband is not a blood relation. (A mere quibble, like Portia's pound of flesh without blood.)

DEFENCE.

If it comes to that, neither is a mother. The best physiologists say that the human mother is in function exactly like Mother Earth. She provides the soil for the seed, she does not provide the seed itself.

PROSECUTION.

A monstrous doctrine, to deny a mother's sacred blood!

DEFENCE.

No more monstrous than to deny the bond between husband and wife.

APOLLO'S EVIDENCE.

When I commanded the prisoner to kill his mother I merely revealed the Will of Zeus. That is the highest of all laws.

CROSS-EXAMINED.

"If Zeus thinks so much of the sanctity of the father, does he think nothing of the mother?"—"The two cases were not parallel." "Did not Zeus bind his own father?"—"You are trying to make mischief. Zeus knows how to repair any wrong he may have done in the past. He learns and heals."

"Are you not polluted by touching a murderer?"—"No: Zeus himself touched and forgave the first murderer, Ixîon, when he came to him in supplication."

ATHENA (*to the* JUDGES).

Decide according to your consciences; for me, I belong utterly to Zeus and my will is his will. Therefore my vote is for acquittal.

P. 229, l. 570. Apparently seats are placed on the Stage or round the Orchestra for the Judges. They are accompanied by a crowd of Athenian citizens, women and children among them, who form the Chorus in the final scene. See pp. 251 f.

P. 230, ll. 576 ff. Apollo appears both as a witness and as a patron or sympathizer : quite an important character in ancient justice.

P. 231, l. 589. The three bouts : of an ordinary wrestling match.

P. 233, l. 610. "I can no more" : Orestes is at the end of his forces. He can speak no more, and merely longs to have his fate settled somehow. Cf. his words to Athena, p. 225, l. 468.

P. 234, l. 632. A marble bed, etc. The text seems defective here. The same kind of marble vessel served both as a bath and as a sarcophagus.

P. 234, l. 641. Who cast in bonds his father and his king : There is often an awkward clash between the Zeus of Aeschylus' exalted conception and the Zeus of accepted mythology. Still, it is quite in consonance with Aeschylus' conception that Zeus should have done violence, and then learned better and made amends.

P. 235, l. 660. Cf. p. 232, l. 606 above. This theory of generation was largely held in antiquity, and has only been disproved in recent times. See Aristotle, *De Gen. Anim.*, Book 4. Eur., *Orestes*, 552 ff.

P. 236, l. 682. What none before hath given : i.e. hitherto they have only gone by mechanical tests and ordeals ; now they have tried to find the full truth. The Council of the Areopagus was a Council of Elders, of the type usual in ancient Indo-European Societies, reinforced, like the Roman Senate, by the co-optation of all ex-magistrates ("Archontes"). It exercised a

general supervision over the State, especially in matters of religious pollution At the time of the Persian invasion it seems to have been the only organ of the constitution which held firm, and consequently for the next seventeen years it exercised a predominant influence over Athens. In the year 461–460, three years before this play, its political powers were severely cut down by the democratic party led by Ephialtes, but its jurisdiction in cases of blood-pollution was left. If we ask what the political bearing of the *Eumenides* was, in a time of fierce party feeling, the answer is not hard to find. Aeschylus preaches reconciliation (pp. 247, 250) and magnifies the original function of the Areopagus, which it still retains.

P. 240, l. 751. One cast pebble : A proverb referring to the pebble or stone of the seashore used for voting. (Cf. p. 239, l. 741.)

P. 240, l. 754. An Argive alliance was traditional in Athens. However, after this one passionate speech we almost forget Orestes. His case has raised an issue so much greater than itself.

P. 241, l. 778. The Younger Gods are the Gods of the new dispensation, the followers of Zeus.

Pp. 241 ff., ll. 792–890. Athena's speeches. It is difficult to say what particular plea of Athena's won the Erînyes over, and transformed them to " *Eumenides* (*Kindly Ones*)." The effect of her patience and persuasion was cumulative. But l. 885 gives the essential test : " Do they believe in Persuasion, which is the gift of Zeus and the office of Athena ? " That is, " Do they admit that there is a place in the Law for reason and understanding ? " If so, they will accept their new position, expressing a truer law than the old.

P. 243, l. 834. Why should marriage and child-birth fall under the special charge of the Erînyes ?

Because the Chthonian (or underworld) Powers punish transgression by barrenness and similar curses, while they reward normal conduct by sending up the fruits of the Earth, including the young of animals and men. Also the old female goddesses, dating from matriarchal times, were naturally concerned with women's affairs.

P. 246, l. 910. The ungodly : The Erînyes carry on the same functions as before, but their "Moira" as punishers of the guilty falls into its due proportion.

P. 247, l. 919. "War with the stranger, yes . . . but not the mad bird-rage that slays at home" : The dates here are significant : B.C. 461, Kimon, the aristocratic leader, banished : 460, the Areopagus attacked and reduced in power : in return Ephialtes, the democratic leader, murdered. 458 : An inscription of this year has been found, which records the names of Athenian citizens killed in war on five different fronts —amazing energy for a single city. 457 : Battle of Tanagra : Kimon asks to be allowed to fight in the Athenian ranks ; the request is refused, but his friends take his armour into battle with them and place it at their head. After the battle, which ended in defeat, Kimon is recalled.—War, faction and reconciliation in abundance ! Mr. R. W. Livingstone in *J.H.S.* xlv. pp. 120 ff has emphasized the influence which this feud-torn atmosphere must have had in leading Aeschylus to his gospel of forgiveness.

P. 251, l. 997. To neighbour Jove's eternal eyes : The great Olympieum, or Temple of Zeus Olympios, was on the plain a little way from the Acropolis.

P. 251, l. 1002. Your secret chambers : Amid the limestone rocks of the Areopagus was a chasm through which rose a spring of dark water. It was held to be a way to the Underworld. It also led to the seat of these goddesses, called generally Semnai (Venerable)

or Eumenides (Kindly Ones) because their real name, Erînyes, was rather too awful for common use.

P. 252, l. 1028. Robes of crimson dye : The late Walter Headlam pointed out that a crimson robe was the mark of a *metoikos* or " resident alien " received in Athens. That is what the Erînyes became when they accepted their cavern.

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